

■ Greece ■

Hellenic mutual in 'strong' shape

By Nigel Lowry in Athens

CELEBRATING 10 years of existence in Athens this week, the Hellenic Hull Mutual Association has told members that it is in the strongest position since inception, with increasing numbers of vessels being entered.

The Hellenic, which was set up in January 1994 to cater exclusively to the Greek and Cypriot shipping communities, has underwritten more than 3,000 risks and has about 620 vessels entered. This compares with 127 ships in 2000.

Director Bob Wiggins said the mutual's fleet consisted of ships of "all types and size... belonging to small, medium and large shipowners".

For the last two years, the association's policy had been to limit participations to "a manageable level" and refuse to accept business considered uneconomic.

"We will continue this policy into 2004 whilst at the same time looking for ways to increase the association's strength," Mr Wiggins stated.

"Our principal purpose for

existing is to support the Greek and Cypriot shipping communities. We are here to support you," he told owners at the 10th birthday celebrations. "But in order for us to do this, you must support us."

Executives of the mutual estimated that the average line of cover the association now retains per ship has fallen dramatically to about 15%.

Not long ago, lines of 70-80% of the total hull cover were common, Lloyd's List was told.

The association is being

protected by some of the world's largest reinsurers, including Munich Re, Swiss Re and GEC Francona, it was pointed out.

"Over the last five years we have worked very hard to develop the Hellenic from a small hull club specialising in older tonnage into a fully fledged hull mutual insurer with sound underwriting policies," said Mr Wiggins.

Although the 2003 underwriting year was still being audited, he was "confident" the club would again show a surplus.