Since 2020, Carla Monrabal has been the president of Argentine Puerto Dock Sud Management Consortium. Time to catch up on her efforts around decarbonization, digitalization, and diversity

Charlie Bartlett

here is more than one reason to be excited about Argentina’s future. The World Bank estimates it could increase its GDP by 2.7% in 2030 by shifting to a low-carbon economy, and with an abundance of wind energy, Argentina is being mooted as one of the big winners in the oncoming global green energy gold rush — a prospect that has not been passed by Carla Monrabal, president of Puerto Dock Sud Management Consortium (COPDS).

“We recognize the potential that this transition to cleaner, more sustainable energy can achieve and the need for us to take full advantage of it.” Monrabal explained how the port is doing this. “We have joined the Global Ports Hydrogen Coalition, an activity developed by the Clean Energy Ministerial Hydrogen Initiative. This membership gives us the opportunity to share knowledge and collaborate with more than 40 ports and organizations internationally, with the goal of promoting the use of green hydrogen as a zero-emission alternative energy source in our port facilities and operations.” In addition, the port is “part of the Consortium for the Development of the Hydrogen Economy in Argentina promoted by YPF Technology, which aims to promote collaborative work between companies, organizations and key players in the country for the national development of this energy vector.”

Getting certified

While the perception of ports, particularly those handling oil and gas vessels, has not been as bastions of green thinking, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are front-and-center in Puerto Dock Sud as the only certified port in the region. Is this a tough sell? “I wish to change the widespread perception that ports are not sustainable.” Monrabal illustrates the necessary business of changing company culture to create environments where women actively seek to work. “Since my arrival at the Port of Dock Sud, I knew that one of the main objectives of my administration would be the gender issue because I understood that, as the first woman to preside a port in the province of Buenos Aires, I had to fulfill a double responsibility, to manage the port well and to do it with equity,” Monrabal told PSF.

Prior to 2020, Puerto Dock Sud had been content to fulfill its operational brief, lacking action plans for improving efficiency and competitiveness, as well as any policies for inclusion or care for the environment. “Nor were there any links with the local community, which made the Port of Dock Sud at that time seem disconnected from its surroundings,” Monrabal added.

“After taking office, together with my team, we focused on five key areas: community, infrastructure, sustainability, security and gender. Since then, we have implemented measures to improve port infrastructure, promote greater equity, adopt sustainable practices, strengthen port security and establish a closer connection with the local community.” In one example, the training to work program operates within the municipality of Avellaneda, province of Buenos Aires, and the Rio Santiago Shipyard, with courses aimed at reducing the gap between women and men within the port — including for hands-on manual labor even today is widely thought of as men’s work. Sure enough, engaging with the local community to communicate this has had results. But the changes have hardly been limited to the boardroom.

“Thanks to this program, one of the first graduates managed to join the construction company specialized in horizontal drilling, Mar Profundo,” said Monrabal.

“Despite the fact that historically, ports have been a male-exclusive sector, the reality is that women play an irreducible role in societal development,” she reminds readers and looks forward to guiding the port into a sustainable future.

“I wish to change the widespread perception that ports are not sustainable

CARLA MONRABAL

Photo: Puerto Docks Sud