

**SALINI: PANAMA'S NEW CANAL PASSES THE TEST ON THE ATLANTIC**

*June 11, 2015* – The waters of Gatun Lake, the largest artificial body of its kind in the world, began flooding the new canal in Panama on the side of the Atlantic Ocean. This manoeuvre, conducted successfully today, was the first important stress-test to date of the Third Set of Locks, which is being built on the Central American isthmus by an international consortium led at the operational level by Salini Impregilo. The same test will be conducted on the other system of locks on the Pacific side at the end of the month.

The opening of the valves is the first phase of the flooding of the locks to try out the Italian-built sluice gates and the electromechanical system. By the first half of 2016, they will regulate the passage of ships between the Atlantic and Pacific thanks to a synchronicity between the gates lasting less than five minutes for each one - a manoeuvre that will repeat itself 24 hours a day, 365 days a year once the project is complete. During the next three to four months, further tests will be conducted on the system of locks that opens onto the Atlantic.

“The initial flooding of the locks of the new Panama Canal is a historic moment for all of us. At this moment, it’s without a doubt the most complex project in the world from an engineering point of view,” said Pietro Salini, chief executive of Salini Impregilo. “It’s a \$5 billion project of extraordinary significance not only at the technical level but also for the impact that it will have on global trade.”

The Third Set of Locks is the biggest engineering project in the world in decades whose numbers are without equal. The new canal will allow for the transit of ships that are nearly 400 meters long with a capacity of up to 14,000 containers - or 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) - three times the amount carried by ships that pass through the existing canal. The project has seen the excavation of 50 million metric cubes of earth, the pouring of five million metric cubes of concrete, the use of 290,000 tonnes of iron and the work of more than 10,000 workers. The giant sluice doors are - on average - about 30 meters tall, 10 meters wide and 58 meters long. Each weighs more than 3,000 tonnes.

In order to sail across the Gatun Lake located some 27 meters higher than level of either ocean, the ships enter this ideal hydraulic lift consisting of three chambers fitted with a system of sliding sluice gates. Each chamber is 55 meters high, 427 meters long and 18.3 meters deep.

The new canal will be used by supertankers that carry up to three million barrels of oil, transforming it into the passageway for half of the world’s black gold. It will allow these ships - known as post-Panamax - to avoid having to spend a month and 20,000 kilometers of circumnavigation. In a mere eight hours, they will be able to pass from one ocean to the other.

The Third Set of Locks is also an example in sustainability. To preserve the lake, large basins have been dug alongside each set of locks to reuse the water taken from the lake to fill each chamber. In this way, about 60% of the water is saved, reducing the amount required to about 200 million liters from 500 million liters.

With the new canal, Panama will double the income it gets from the tolls, which at the moment total some \$2.5 billion dollars a year. It is also bound to give a boost to tourism. In 2014,



Panama saw record 982,392 tourists come to admire the working of the existing canal. This number is bound to increase with the opening of the new canal.

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