

Minister Censu Galea:

***MALTESE GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO CONTINUE
SUPPORTING IMLI***



Hon. Minister Censu Galea, Minister for Competitiveness and Communications of the Republic of Malta.

This is the text of the welcome address by **Hon. Minister Censu Galea**, in occasion of the inaugural lecture at IMLI:

Dr. Balkin, representative of the International Maritime Organisation,
Professor Attard,
Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international maritime sector, notwithstanding other alternative means of transport, such as rail and air, still plays a vital and crucial role as a means of communication between countries. Particularly, for countries like Malta, an Island State surrounded by the arterial sea routes of the Mediterranean, being equidistant from the northern and southern littorals of the region, maritime affairs have always been, an important pillar of domestic economy.

The importance given to the maritime sector, has in the last decade or so increased considerably. Government has recognized our national commitment in the sector and has ensured that its continuous development of this sector is maintained.

Undoubtedly, this sector has developed at a very fast rate, and Malta, following the required investments today boasts of providing a wide range of international maritime services and facilities. These range from our natural harbors and well equipped ports, extensive bunkering, ship supplies and towage services, ship repair facilities, a major transshipment center in the Mediterranean, a fast moving and modern cruise liner terminal and of course, an international ship register which is now recognized as one of the leading registers in the world.



IMLI students and guests attending the inaugural lecture.

The training programme of the International Maritime Organization, of which the International Maritime Law Institute is one of the major components is wide embracing

and long term, it is directed towards government administrations, the seafarer and the private sector. Implementation of maritime law is the responsibility of all players. IMO aims towards a universal setting and implementation of standards. We are here focusing on forging solid foundations that can ensure universal sustainability for the decades to come.

Government considers the maritime sector as an important economic activity and service provider and whilst furthering its development and strengthening this sector, wants to guarantee that these services are provided at the highest quality standards.

We are confident that the alignment of the relative Maltese legislation with that of the European Union's acquis and with the International Maritime Organization's regulations has shown our Commitment to having safer seas both within our region and worldwide.

You have embarked on the first step to form part of the ever increasing global family being the International Maritime Organization, at the very heart of this programme. It is important to keep in mind that the IMO family is not only its Secretariat and the officials from its member states but includes all those who work towards ensuring safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment. Malta is proud to contribute towards this international development.

In fact the Malta Maritime Authority and Maltese government have been very active in securing the concept of safer seas by working on a national level and also internationally. Now that Malta and Cyprus have become a member of the European Union, the EU as a whole has become the largest maritime flag in the world. Malta, together with other leading countries, are working hard through the EU's institutions to promote and legislate in favor of safer shipping standards.

In this context Malta is also working towards the implementation of such initiatives through the International Maritime Organization where we are proud to say that IMO over the past year Malta has been re-elected with an increase number of votes to its executive Council.

The importance given to the maritime sector by the EU has in recent years been given a particular impetus by the European Commission, and it appears that this will be consolidated even further. It is this increased awareness within the European Commission of the importance of the Maritime sector that makes us confident of Malta's maritime future and vocation in the European Union. We are determined to carry our baggage of experience within the EU, and utilize our strategic geographic indications to our best benefit. Dr. Joe Borg, former Maltese Minister of Foreign Affairs has been appointed by the Barroso Commission, Commissioner for Fisheries Maritime Affairs. This is indeed a prestigious responsibility for Malta and we intend to closely collaborate for the best benefit of Malta, the Mediterranean and Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I said Malta's commitment to maritime security is ongoing and the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications, responsible for maritime affairs, has recently set-up a maritime Security Committee. In fact the first session of the Maritime Security Committee was convened earlier this month and brought together the main players and stakeholders within this sector.

This committee is discussing amongst other issues port security and aims at enabling Malta to meet its obligations under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea coupled with the enhancement of ship and port security.

The Maritime Security Committee will be discussing a new set of port security regulations which will come into force following the necessary amendments and approval to the proposed legal notice, applying to Passenger ships, Cargo ships, Mobile offshore drilling units, and Port facilities within the internal and territorial waters of Malta that serve a ship.

Once the terms of reference of the regulations are approved, a designated authority must ensure that with respect to each port facility within the ports and territorial limits of Malta, port facility security assessments are carried out, reviewed, and approved and that respective plans are developed, implemented, maintained and approved. It must also specify the appropriate security level for port facilities within the internal and territorial limits of Malta.

I am therefore satisfied that issues pertinent to maritime security have gathered together to discuss common concerns and interests, therefore demonstrating that mutual cooperation is of the essence to ensure a smooth proceeding of the discussions and eventual publication of the new port security regulations.

Through the system of sharing information, it will be possible that both within internal ports and territorial waters, all shipping movements, including vessel, crew and cargo information are known. This will enable us to keep port security at high levels guaranteeing the well-being of both the shipping industry and respective port operations.

Allow me to underline that World Maritime Day will be celebrated by the International Maritime Organization next week. Today could be regarded as an early commemoration of that day. The assembly of so many maritime countries convened here today in the interest of international maritime law is indeed a benefiting celebration. Miss Balkin, on behalf of the Secretary General of the IMO, please accept the greetings of the Maltese government, maritime Malta and the many maritime administrations represented here today. Please convey to the distinguished Secretary General, our commitment to the cause of IMO. Our commitment not only to the promulgation of international law but also to its implementation.

In his message for World Maritime Day, the Secretary General has stressed that "we must make sure that high levels of vigilance and awareness are maintained and built upon until they become second nature throughout the shipping and port industries." These are very

meaningful words indeed and their application goes beyond the theme of maritime security.

I augur that the next scholastic year will be fruitful and that you will be able to use the knowledge and capabilities acquired at IMLI for the benefit of the global shipping sector.

It is within this context and frame of mind that I am pleased to note that the Malta Maritime Authority will this year be investing time, finances and resources to join you for some of the lectures. Furthermore, early in 2005, the Authority will also welcome for the eleventh consecutive year a group of students who are following a Port Management Course at the World Maritime University. Moreover, Government is committed to continue providing and maintaining the premises housing this Institute, whilst the Malta Maritime Authority will again this year provide financial assistance for the realization of one of the projects that ensure that this institution remains a dynamic organization striving to serve the rule of international maritime law.

Dear Students,

May 2005, your graduation month, appears to be far ahead. A difficult stretch of water that you have to navigate through. They are not unchartered waters however. More than three hundred fellow students from nearly one hundred countries have successfully navigated through them over the past fifteen years. Distinguished resident lecturers and visiting professors, under the guidance of the Director of the Institute have plotted your course.

I am confident that the facilities and lecturers in this course will give you a deep insight into the intricacies of Maritime Law and Policy and that you will successfully rise to the occasion.

It is therefore with pleasure to inaugurate this year's International Maritime Law Institute scholastic year.