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President – Emeritus H.E. Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici:

“ It is important for maritime lawyers to be familiar with other legal systems”

H.E. Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, President – Emeritus of Malta, is currently delivering a course on comparative law to the 17th generation of IMLI lawyers.

His lectures cover a wide range of topics including “*The Mainstream of Law in the West*”, “*The Specific Nature of the Anglo –Saxon Common Law System*”, “*Law in Islamic Countries*”, “*The Law in Marxist Systems*” and “*Law and Change: the Drafting of new Laws.*” The study of comparative law is given great importance at IMLI after it was introduced in the curriculum some ten years ago, as it provides a useful tool for understanding the main legal systems of the world.



H.E. Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, President – Emeritus of Malta lecturing to the IMLI Class of 2005/2006.

H. E. Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici was President of Malta between 1994 and 1999. Prior to that (in 1987) he was appointed to the Cabinet as Minister of Education. His portfolio included Education, Environment, Broadcasting, Culture, Youth, Museums and Sport. In 1990 he became Minister of Education and the Interior and in 1992 he was appointed Minister of Education and Human Resources.

As a Member of Parliament, he took an active interest in the updating of Malta's legislation and he was a member of numerous selected Committees including the Committee set up to draft the Constitutional changes that declared Malta a Republic.

Your Excellency, what are the highlights of your Course on Comparative Law at IMLI ?

The aim of my lectures is to compare the different legal systems and legal traditions as the Sharia, Civil Law and Common Law and the various mixed systems deriving from it.

Today's world is urging toward harmonization and in certain areas towards unification of laws and therefore it is extremely important for (maritime) lawyers to be familiar with other legal systems.

What is in your opinion the role of IMLI within the international (maritime) community ?

IMLI is playing a very important role as it brings together young lawyers who are or will be influential in their own countries and makes them aware of what are the trends in other countries. IMLI helps them to look on a wider horizon.

You are a member of the Venice Commission (European Commission for Democracy through Law). Can you describe its main goals ?

The Venice Commission (European Commission for Democracy through Law) is the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional matters. Its main function is to examine laws referred to it by different States or from the Assembly of the Council of Europe, according to the criteria of Europe's standard of democracy.

It is important to note that the Venice Commission does not examine laws on its own discretion and it is very discrete in its communication of opinions. The participation in the work of the Commission is on a voluntary basis and observes from outside Europe are also taking part in its work. The advices of the Commission are very often implemented.

What is the significance of IMLI for Malta ?

Malta is a maritime State with an important ship register. I would say that IMLI makes people around the globe aware of the importance of Malta in the field of international maritime law and in the maritime sector in general.

What are your general impressions about IMLI students ?

IMLI brings to Malta a number of young people from many different States and they are definitely enriching the life of the University. The level of IMLI lawyers has been improving throughout the years but I have to admit that the current generation is of a particular good standing.

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