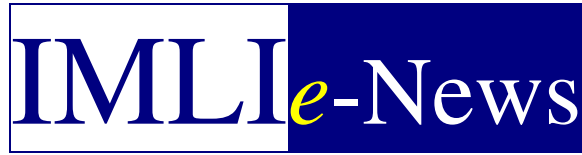


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**GRADUATION ADDRESS BY THE  
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME  
ORGANIZATION  
AT THE 17<sup>th</sup> IMLI GRADUATION CEREMONY**

On Saturday, 13 May 2006, the IMO International Maritime Institute (IMLI) held its 17<sup>th</sup> Graduation Ceremony. The Graduation Address was delivered by the Secretary – General of the International Maritime Organization and Chairman of the IMLI Governing Board, Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos.



Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos (Secretary – General, IMO and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board) delivering the Graduation Address at the 17<sup>th</sup> IMLI Graduation Ceremony

*“Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Honourable Justices, Chancellor, Governing Board Members, Chairman, Malta Maritime Authority, Director of REMPEC, Parents, Graduands, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,*

*I am extremely pleased to address you today at this year’s IMO International Maritime Law Institute graduation ceremony. By the end of this ceremony, another 31 young men and women will join the growing ranks of IMLI graduates worldwide who make a significant difference to the international shipping community with the knowledge and skills acquired here. To you, the Class of 2006, this ceremony marks not just the culmination of your academic achievements, but also the beginning of new challenges for you, your country and the maritime community at large.*

*Maritime law, whether international or national, does not develop in isolation, but influences and is, in turn, moulded by the politics, economics and geography of the 'real world' to which it applies. The seas have traditionally and, from time immemorial, been used as a marine highway to promote trade between nations but, in recent years, the uses to which the seas have been put have multiplied as a result, particularly, of technological developments and an increasing demand for resources. This has produced, at times, considerable stresses within the international community and strong pressures for changes in international maritime law, such as in the freedom of navigation, environmental protection and maritime security.*

*The attraction of exploring for, and exploiting marine resources, coupled with the constraints of geography and technological capability, have led States to develop a range of pragmatic legal solutions which enable the seas to continue to be utilized in an orderly manner. These developments in international maritime law have been brought about by peaceful diplomacy, but in practically every case there is an underlying potential for conflict between the interests of the different users of the seas and their resources. It is the task of international maritime law to accommodate the broad range of uses and, at the same time, to provide a framework for resolving conflicts between them.*

*In many ways, the major issues in global shipping are the same as those that global society as a whole is currently facing. It goes without saying, of course, that the commercial pressures on shipping to provide quality services at minimal cost continue to grow. Everybody, it seems, wants more for less, although I personally would question whether the ultimate consequences of such an approach have really been thought through. Shipping has to ensure that its activities are sustainable and, in this, I include everything from ship design, construction and equipment, through ship operation, to the final disposal of ships*

*once their economic lives are over. This means that, whatever negative impact shipping may have on the environment and the human cost, it must be reduced to the point where it is clearly outweighed by the positive benefits that the activity brings.*

*Safety and security continue to be among the most immediate prime concerns, both for society as a whole and for shipping, as the tragic loss of the ferry **al-Salam Boccaccio 98** in the Red Sea in February and the continued criminal activity by pirates in the waters off Somalia and elsewhere, highlight all too graphically.*

*The loss of 1,000 lives in the Red Sea is all too tragic, as it occurred during what was supposed to be a routine voyage between two ports of neighbouring countries and is a cause for great concern that accidents of this kind still happen, in spite of the extensive work on the safety of Ro-Ro passenger ships that IMO has done over many years and, in particular, in the wake of the accidents involving the **Herald of Free Enterprise**, the **Scandinavian Star** and the **Estonia**. I hope that the investigation into the accident, to which IMO has provided independent technical support and advice through our technical co-operation programme, will be able to identify the causes of the disaster and I am determined to ensure that, should it bring to light any areas where remedial action in the international regulatory regime might be required, IMO will move fast to act as necessary.*

*But, as you know, it will be for the States that are party to that regime to implement any adopted improvements effectively and uniformly; which brings me to the issue of domestic compliance with, and enforcement of, international rules and conventions.*

*Over the years IMO has developed and put in place a legal framework of rules and standards sufficient to meet nearly every need of the international maritime industry and Governments, as well as the concerns of civil society. But this, of itself, constitutes only the first step. To be fully effective, these rules and standards need to be incorporated into national legislation and effectively implemented. However, due in part to a lack of qualified legal experts, some States are unable to meet this objective.*

*IMLI was established in 1989 by IMO for precisely that reason - to help facilitate and to galvanize the pace of ratification by ensuring a steady supply, nationally, of well-trained maritime legal experts to incorporate the often complex international maritime legal framework of rules, codes and standards into national legislation. The studies and training at IMLI are specifically designed to equip its students with the requisite specialist skills to fulfil this function. The importance of their role, as maritime law specialists, in taking on this task and many others cannot be over-emphasized. The responsibility for managing the legal framework, to ensure that quality shipping prospers, depends in large measure on the knowledge and professional skills of lawyers such as those who graduate today.*

*It is very gratifying for me to note the ever-increasing number of lawyers that have successfully graduated from IMLI. Over the past 17 years, as the number of IMLI alumni continues to grow and they become established lawyers around the globe, the practical result of the Institute's expertise is making a significant contribution towards a maritime safety culture and heightened marine environment awareness. Each one of those who are leaving this Institute today can look forward to playing a crucial part in this noble effort.*

*IMLI's progress has been dependent upon the continuing support received from donors who have contributed either to the Institute's general fund or providing fellowships, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the European Union, the Government of Switzerland, the Nippon Foundation and Lloyd's Register of Shipping for their most valuable assistance. I look forward to a continuation of this vital aid.*

*I would also like to give special recognition and thanks to the Government of Malta for the consistent support it has given to IMO and to IMLI over many years, not only as the Host Country, but also as a truly maritime nation in charge of one of the largest merchant fleets of the world. I would like to thank in person Mr. Galea for his co-operation and support.*

*The Institute's success is due largely to the dedication and hard work of the students and graduates. It is also directly attributable to the high standard of teaching rendered by IMLI's teaching faculty and the cadre of visiting lecturers who give their services voluntarily. I would especially note the leadership provided by Professor Attard with respect to both academic and administrative matters. His dedication and commitment to, and pride in, the Institute is exemplary and I urge him to continue serving it with the same zeal and passion in the years to come. To all of them and to the efficient administrative staff we extend our heartfelt thanks.*

*I warmly and wholeheartedly congratulate you, graduands, on this prestigious occasion. Staying the course and achieving the standards required for successful graduation is no easy matter and all of you can justly feel proud of yourselves for having done so. And all those who have played a part in helping you to finish your studies also deserve to feel an enormous professional pride and personal satisfaction in your achievement. You join an impressive global network*

*of 361 IMLI graduates in 107 countries and territories. As we look to the future, it is clear that the quality of the human resources that shipping will need will be the biggest single determining factor in our drive for an industry of excellence. Standards will keep on improving if we can continue to foster and promote a quality culture that embraces safety, security, efficiency, environmental protection and social responsibility; one that permeates to all levels of the sector – to each Administration, each company, each individual.*

*You have chosen to make your legal career in this, the most vital and possibly the most challenging of industries and I congratulate you on your choice. In your chosen careers, you will be required to assist your country to sustain and expand its role in the development of a shipping infrastructure that keeps pace with the demands of world trade, whilst always maintaining the highest standards. Your degree singles you out as individuals with the ability to meet these challenges and the desire to make a constructive impact in the industry. I am confident that you will take up this task with diligence and play a crucial role in the global maritime community of the future. So cherish the moment and enjoy it. Feel proud of yourselves and this day as we, and your parents, are proud of you. I wish you all good luck and every success and greatly look forward to working together with you in the next stage of your professional life.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, thank you."*

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