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***VALEDICTORY ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE CLASS OF 2006 AT THE  
17<sup>th</sup> IMLI GRADUATION CEREMONY***



***Ms. Regina Derkintyte (Lithuania) delivering the Valedictory Address on behalf  
of the students at the 2006 IMLI Graduation Ceremony.***

*And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.*

*(Genesis I, The Beginning)*

Oceans and humankind are indivisible. Since time immemorial the earth's waters were not only a heaven-sent source of food, a means of communication and a gateway to foreign trade, but they were also a driving passion for wealth and expansion, an appetite for discovery of the unknown, spirit of adventure and thirst for the freedom of the seas that we, the modern maritime community, experience in our very existence today.

However, the XXI century brings forward one of the most challenging tasks - how can we further explore the vast potential of the seas, in a way that respects and strengthens the important balance between social, economic and environmental concerns? Is it possible to divide and give different weights to these issues when events such as the recent passenger ferry tragedy in the Red Sea and more recurrent occurrences such as rampant piracy in the waters of Somalia remind us that notwithstanding unimpeachable regulatory frameworks we are still sometimes unable to prevent certain events from happening?

The international maritime community speaks loudly about the key issues today: these being safety and security, a qualified and motivated labor force, environmental concerns, the need for high-tech innovations, new regulatory frameworks and enforcement remedies. The International Maritime Organization, being principal governor of the shipping industry, in the first place plants a seedling in the soil. The initiative is either a reaction to a perceived or known gap in the law or is taken in anticipation of possible developments. In both cases the IMO provides the necessary structures and mechanisms to examine and,

subsequently, establish the required legal framework. However, in order to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of such framework, to ensure its enforcement – to purport this seedling to turn into leaf and to prosper - the efforts of the international maritime community in its entirety have to be made.

And it cannot be merely phrase-mongering or vain promises, it is our daily work. For flag states – to ensure seaworthiness of the ships flying their flag, for port authorities – to prevent substandard shipping, for shipowners – to refrain from all illegal practices including harmful discharges and dumping into the sea, for seafarers – to ensure good watch-keeping, and for us, maritime lawyers – to be ready to counsel, to suggest and to recommend at the time, when and in the manner, that our advice is needed.

IMLI in this context of united efforts plays an unarguably important role by delivering a comprehensive course on public maritime law and shipping law in some 200 days. The participants in this course are lawyers with diverse experience, coming from different legal systems and sharing different cultural views. IMLI's role is therefore more than a simple task, it is a challenge! I believe that for most of us who have undertaken this course – IMLI is probably one of the best discoveries we could have ever made.

For my part, I come from a small country with a big soul and a great history – Lithuania. The free port on the Eastern coast of the Baltic Sea is the most important and the biggest Lithuanian transport hub, connecting sea, land and railway routes from East to West. Even in the process of its accession to the European Union particular emphasis was placed by Lithuania on its sea transport policy as this guarantees our political and economical independence and contributes to what we are today. Working for the biggest shipping company in Lithuania, I daily face the problems of seafarers who truly dedicate their lives to

sea, I admire the challenges and risks taken by investors who make the shipping business go on, I appreciate efforts of government institutions that implement international regulations into our legal system. And today sharing the joy of celebration with you I deeply realize the commitments and responsibility, which I assume while becoming one of the IMLI's graduates.

Our academic struggle is over, but it is the end of the beginning – we bid farewell immensely enriched in knowledge and expertise, but it is now in our hands to serve the rule of international maritime law and to contribute to safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans.

Though we are proud today of our academic achievements, we owe this success to those who have made it all possible: to our respective sponsors and Governments, to the IMO, the Nippon Foundation, Lloyd's Register of Shipping and other organizations, institutions and individuals, who have assisted us throughout our stay at the Institute.

Words fail to express our appreciation to director of the Institute, Professor David Attard. To attend the lectures of one of the major authorities on the subject, to experience his remarkable teaching techniques and to share the knowledge accumulated throughout the years of constant work and research is more than appreciation, it is an honour. We bow our thanks to Dr. Ivan Vella, Mr. Norman Martinez and Mr. Mitja Grbec who patiently and with unflagging energy guided us to the world of maritime law. We also express our deep gratitude to remarkable foreign lecturers who grace the Institute with their attendance throughout the year. All our achievements would not have been possible without the constant assistance of the IMLI staff, which provided us with the necessary administrative and technical support.

I believe that one of the best treasures discovered during our stay in IMLI are our classmates. Each of us made his own deposit into the “international bank of brain and experience”, which will pay dividends in the near future: so that anytime anywhere anybody could return for a piece of advice, for a helping hand or just sightseeing tour in the foreign country. Cultural diversity was drowned by the will to share our day-to-day life here. All the time we also felt the support from those at home – our families, spouses and children, our friends and colleagues – who are sharing our joy today and to whom we dedicate most of our achievements in life.

We also take this opportunity to bow our thanks to Malta and its warm-hearted people for sincere welcome, inexhaustible hospitality throughout our stay in one of the most beautiful and open-handed countries of the world. It is impossible to forget the silence of Mdina, greatness of Valletta, astonishing view from the Barrakka gardens, eternity embodied in ancient temples and stories of Knights... Today more than twenty good-will ambassadors are leaving your country with sadness to farewell, but joy to share the beauty and history of your land all over the world.

Let us once again express our genuine acknowledgement to those, whose constant guidance, unfailing encouragement, inexhaustible patience, utmost devotion, inspiring suggestions, generous ideas and good cheer contributed towards this step in our life.

May God bless you all.

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