

IMO SECRETARY-GENERAL AND CHAIRMAN OF THE IMLI GOVERNING BOARD DELIVERS THE GRADUATION ADDRESS

During IMLI's 24th Graduation Ceremony, Mr. Koji Sekimizu (IMO Secretary-General and Chairman of the IMLI Governing Board) delivered the graduation address as follows:

“Hon. Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Hon. Minister for Economy, Investment and Small Business, Hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Competitiveness and Economic Growth, President Emeritus, Excellencies, Representative of The Nippon Foundation, IMLI Governing Board Members, Chairman of the Legal Committee, IMLI Director, Parents, Graduands, IMLI Staff, Media Representatives, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and a privilege to be with you at this important ceremony. Pride of place, of course, goes to the students; but this is also an important occasion for the staff and academic faculty of IMLI, a time when they can reflect on a successful outcome to their work and a job well done.

Above all, the annual graduation of each year's class of students from IMLI is time for congratulation, for celebration and for contemplation.

We congratulate the students who have successfully completed their studies at this august Institution; we celebrate their achievements; and we contemplate, with them, the opportunities now before them to make their own, unique mark in the maritime world and in their own countries, as they return home after their time at IMLI.

In order to participate effectively in the international maritime sector, States must be able to implement international conventions and instruments adopted by IMO, and other relevant international organizations. To do this, they need the appropriate legal infrastructure to incorporate the provisions of the respective conventions and instruments into national law and procedures for applying and enforcing the requirements of the applicable law in all relevant situations.

For this purpose, States, as well as the shipping industry, require the services of well-trained legal personnel with specialization in maritime and shipping law.

For twenty-four years, IMLI has been providing the training and education needed to produce lawyers with the background and qualification to establish, develop and maintain such national legal infrastructures.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me share with you some of the very impressive facts and figures arising from this academic year at IMLI. It is a year that has seen thirty-four Master of Laws students, from twenty-three different States. Among these are four countries that are represented for the first time in the Institute's LL.M. programme, namely Belize, Montenegro, Oman and Spain. Six students, from Bahrain, Brazil, India, Malta and the United States, are enrolled in the Advanced Diploma programme; four students attended IMLI's short courses; and seven students are enrolled in the Research Degree programme. All of these will swell the total figure, from all programmes and courses, of 638 graduates from no fewer than 127 States and territories.

We congratulate each of them on their achievements. On a more personal level, special mention must be made of Mr. Ilker Basaran, from Turkey, who will be the first candidate to be awarded the degree of Magister Juris; and Dr. Emmanuel Kofi Mbiah, Chairman of the IMO Legal Committee, who will receive the IMLI Graduate International Achievement Award.

IMLI's excellent record and achievements would not be possible without the strong financial and in-kind assistance of the many donors who support the Institute so generously and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to them. In this context, I am delighted to mention The Nippon Foundation, the Lloyd's Register Foundation, the Swiss Government, the Government of Malta (and Transport Malta), the CMI Charitable Trust and different national and private maritime entities from Azerbaijan, Brazil, Liberia, Nigeria and Turkey. My sincerest thanks go to all of them.

I note in particular that the post of The Nippon Foundation Lecturer has been renewed for a further two-year period, for which we are, again, very grateful.

However, today is principally about the students who are about to graduate from this fine Institution, so let me say a few words for them.

Law is in essence the application of logic and fairness, morale and ethics. Law is something which would protect you. But in public service, law is NOT something to explore for your personal interest. What you have learnt is in the field of maritime law, a field for you to explore giving you the opportunity of serving the community; to promote sound and sustainable shipping under maritime law.

The world economy is still in a challenging period in the wake of unprecedented financial crisis. New players in the economy are emerging in the developing world. With the progress of globalization, we are moving to a more inter-dependent society. The world is changing and at a crossroads; with us standing at a tipping point. The UN is considering the future of the world community.

The Millennium Development Goals were set for 2015. We are struggling to achieve the targets in the remaining less than 1,000 days. Poverty eradication; human rights; and greater social equality are still our targets and geopolitics is still our concern. And international migration is also becoming a serious problem; and climate change is real. We must progress as much as possible under the current MDGs and redefine our post-2015 development agenda.

In addition, Rio+20 generated our determination to get “the future we want” and sustainable development goals. On the climate change issues, world governance is still struggling to develop a workable global framework to mitigate the effect of GHG emissions. However, civil society is making its own progress based on its own initiatives, and the shipping industry is no exception.

Maritime development is essential for the prosperity of any country. For example, Japanese post war economic success was largely due to the availability of maritime transportation infrastructure. Shipbuilding and shipping, ports and seafarers, are essential for the trade and economic growth which would bring prosperity to your people. China followed that path. In history, countries like Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom and all the sea powers, created wealth and prosperity.

The future of the world prosperity depends on development. While the UN is preparing for the post-2015 development agenda, my view is that shipping is a priority field in the context of development: namely ports and inter-modal connections, security, lighthouses, navigational aids, shipbuilding and repair, manufacturing, the shipping industry, seafarer’s education and training. These are essential components of the maritime transportation system.

Each nation has an equal right to develop its own maritime industry. In the future, we foresee more and more development in southern countries; therefore it is natural to think about more maritime developments in southern countries. Without shipping, we cannot ensure development and developing countries should bear proper share of responsibility in shipping activities and benefits derived from maritime transportation.

The key to success is the legal infrastructures and all of you graduates have a real opportunity and possibility of success in your countries in the field of shipping and, eventually, the success of your countries and prosperity of your people.

You must be ambitious. But, you must be ambitious not for yourself but for your community and people.

In my professional life, I have seen many people. People in Governments, people in the industry, people in academia, people in delegations attending IMO meetings. Some are successful; some are not. The successful ones are always hardworking and intelligent; however, hard work and intelligence alone cannot always ensure success. There is something more to it.

In my view, there are two additional characteristics required to achieve success, and, taking this opportunity of celebrating your graduation, I would like to mention them.

First, a simple, honest and open mind to observe the actual world. In your future, you will encounter many challenges and you must apply your own judgement. You must think by yourself, create your own vision and respond without prejudice. This can only be achieved if you have a clear view in the window of your mind. If the eyes of your mind are clouded by shadows, you cannot see clearly the actual developments as they are, and you will not be able to make the right decision.

The second characteristic is the most important one, the heart. To achieve success, you need knowledge, brain power, capacity, experience, clear vision, strategy and tactics; you need to be clever and wise, but, in the end, what really matters is the heart. A big heart will always help you to serve others and, in turn, that helps others to appreciate you. Try to help others without seeking any reward in return. This is the essence of civil service and of living a meaningful life.

The heart is something very flexible in your body that could encourage you and at the same time intimidate you and easily restrict you. You must control your heart and keep it always bigger and warmer.

A simple, honest and open mind, with a big and warm heart, these are the real key that will lead you to success.

Once again congratulations for your graduation. The future is wide open for you. Be ambitious.

All the best and good luck!"