

**IMO International Maritime Law Institute  
2015 Graduation Ceremony, Malta, 30 May 2015  
Address on behalf of Koji Sekimizu,  
Secretary-General, International Maritime Organization**

**Introductory remarks**

Ministers, Commissioner, Excellences, Ombudsman, Members of the Judiciary, Members of the European Parliament, Distinguished Guests, Faculty Members and Staff of IMLI, and most importantly, Members of the Graduating Class and their families:

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today.

I am speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General, who regrets he is unable to attend in person – I was communicating with him last night and I can tell you that there is nowhere he would rather be, and nothing he would rather be doing than to be with the graduates of IMLI here today. Mr. Sekimizu's commitment to IMLI is longstanding and firm, and will remain even after his term ends later this year. But, as Dr. Attard mentioned, the needs of his family prevented his presence today, but his thoughts and congratulations are most certainly with us in this room.

Those of us here who speak in public frequently know that it is often difficult to keep the audience engaged and interested in your words; you stand at the podium and you see people closing their eyes, looking at their phones and what have you. And as a speaker, you must accept that. But today, it is a good day to be a speaker; because I know that there are at least 35 people in this room who are wide awake, alert and with big smiles on their faces; because this is one of the last talks they will listen to at IMLI; and because they have worked very hard to come to this day, and have reached a significant milestone in their careers.

These graduates today become distinguished alumni of this important institution that has already sent over 700 people into the maritime endeavour. As you know, the theme of this year's World Maritime Day is Maritime Education and Training. And in promoting that theme, through the World Maritime Day Parallel Event to be held in Tokyo in July, through the creation of the Maritime Ambassadors Scheme to promote maritime careers, and in all activities related to that theme, the Secretary-General has consistently emphasized that the promotion of careers at sea is not just about promoting the need for more well-trained seafarers – although there is a critical need for them now and in the future. But the theme also highlights the need for well-trained people in all walks of the maritime life: marine architects, engineers and, yes, lawyers. Thus, this graduation ceremony represents a highlight of this year's World Maritime Day efforts, as IMLI is the true embodiment of what maritime education and training is all about. And this graduating class is a shining example of that, as well.

**IMLI today – graduation class of 2015**

The class of 2015 reflected once again the diversity of the course participants at IMLI: the LL.M. programme comprised 34 students from 28 countries and Morocco was represented for the first time this year. Also, four students graduated from the Advanced Diploma programme, one candidate graduated from the M.Jur. programme, and 16 participants enrolled in the short courses offered by the Institute.

## **Sponsors**

None of this would be possible without the contributions of a wide range of sponsors and donors. I would like to thank all those who have supported the institution over the years and continue to do so, especially its main benefactors: IMO, the Nippon Foundation, Lloyd's Register Foundation, the Government of Malta, the Government of Switzerland, Transport Malta (which has also sponsored many of its employees who participated in different short courses offered at the Institute), and the Comité Maritime International Charitable Trust.

Professor David Attard has also provided a scholarship entitled "The IMLI Postgraduate Award" to finance a student undertaking research within the Institute's Research Degree programme.

In addition, the following authorities sponsored the studies of their nominees in the LL.M. programme: the Bahrain Coast Guard, the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, the Ghana Shipper's Authority, the Moroccan Navy, the Mozambique Ports and Railways Authority, the Nigerian Ports Authority, and the Government of the Philippines.

And of course, none of this would be possible without the tireless dedication of the IMLI faculty and staff who have done so much to prepare these graduates, and to the visiting fellows who devote their time to enrich this superior educational experience for the students.

## **Concluding remarks**

The Secretary-General frequently speaks of the IMO system as a "Global System of Shared Responsibility". That IMO Member States, the maritime industry, the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations all share in the global responsibility to ensure safe, secure, efficient, and sustainable shipping on clean oceans. All of mankind is connected to the ocean in some way. But those of us here in this room have made the sea our way of life, we have accepted the global system of shared responsibility as individuals. Certainly, those I have mentioned previously in these remarks have accepted that responsibility on a personal level. We take that responsibility into our hearts.

Many of the IMLI class of 2015 forged their careers through the sea; thus prior to coming here, they had accepted that individual responsibility and commitment to make the global ocean safer, cleaner, more secure and more efficient. By graduating from IMLI here today, you have not only achieved a significant academic milestone, but you have strengthened your individual commitment to that shared responsibility. I urge you to embrace that commitment, to embrace that additional responsibility. Through your hard work in creating your dissertations and through your legislative drafting projects, you have created opportunities for positive change. See them through!

Part of the global system of shared responsibility is effective implementation of IMO conventions and other shipping rules. Your legislative drafting projects all represent golden chances to more effectively implement that regime. Four graduates completed drafting projects to implement the Ballast Water Management Convention in their home countries. What an achievement it would be if one of those projects could become that catalyst for that Convention to enter into force! We are so close to that goal; I challenge these graduates to have their country be the one that pushes it over the line. Similar potential for positive change exists in every other project produced by these graduates, be it the Bunkers Convention, the

SUA Convention, MARPOL, the Rotterdam Rules, ILO C185, and on and on. I won't list every project by every student, but I ask you to look at them in your programme and see the potential they represent. And I urge the graduates to seize that potential.

Remember you now have a formidable worldwide network of friends and colleagues for life. I hope and expect to see many of you at IMO in the future and wish you every success in your future careers.

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