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IMLIe-News

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## IMO SECRETARY-GENERAL, H.E. E. MITROPOULOS INAUGURATES IMLI’s 20th ACADEMIC YEAR

The IMO Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos, inaugurated today IMLI’s twentieth academic year.

The Inauguration Ceremony was opened by IMLI’s Director, Professor David Attard, who delivered a welcoming address which reflected the raison d’être of the Institute. He recalled the Institute’s inception and described how the dream of twenty years ago became the reality of today. He stressed that IMLI’s contribution to the international community is best reflected in the work of its graduates who, upon completion of their studies, return to their countries to occupy senior positions which enable them to devote themselves to the service of the rule of international maritime law. He also referred to the recent creation of IMLI Alumni regional organizations and how they are increasingly participating in the international fora. He concluded by emphasizing that this was the first time the IMO Secretary-General officially inaugurated IMLI’s academic year and commended the ardent support the Secretary-General offers to IMLI’s activities. Professor Attard then invited the Secretary-General to inaugurate the academic year 2008-2009.

During his inaugural address (reproduced below), the Secretary-General highly praised the work of IMLI. He recalled that IMLI was established by IMO in 1988 to ensure that governments would have trained maritime legal experts available to incorporate the often complex international maritime legal framework of rules, codes and standards into national legislation. Bearing the aforesaid in mind, the Secretary-General considered that the Institute has, in fact, more than fulfilled its early promise, having become an indispensable part of IMO’s success, with its graduates going on to make a major contribution to the attainment of the Organization’s goals and objectives.  He mentioned with satisfaction that IMO commemorated IMLI’s twenty years, last June, with the unveiling of a beautiful painting of the Institute, which now hangs proudly at the entrance of IMO’s Main Hall.

The Secretary-General then pointed out that IMLI’s 20th anniversary will coincide with the 20th anniversary of the initiative taken by the Maltese Government, at the United Nations General Assembly, to identify and declare climate change to be a common concern for all humankind.  Indeed, he recalled that it was Professor Attard, then teaching international law at the University of Malta, who, in 1988, first suggested to Malta’s Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Edward Fenech-Adami, that coordinated effort was the only way to address the growing concern over climate change. He then explained that this initiative culminated in the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and it is under that Convention and its Kyoto Protocol that IMO has its mandate to pursue the limitation or reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases from ships. He thus commended Professor Attard on his foresight all those years ago and reassured him, and everyone else, of IMO’s continuing and firm commitment in this regard.

The Secretary-General then recognized the importance of the increasing participation of women in IMLI’s programmes and the international maritime community in general. He was pleased to see that this year, out of 37 students, 22 are female lawyers. The Secretary-General also took the opportunity to express IMO’s gratitude to the continued support donors constantly offer to IMLI.

Finally, The Secretary-General paid tribute to two individuals, without whom – he explained – we might not be here today, looking forward to the start of yet another academic year. First, **Dr. C.P. Srivastava**, whose vision, foresight and determination to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries in matters related to their performance under IMO instruments, gave birth, first to the World Maritime University in Malmö, and then to IMLI. Following its inception, he served IMLI as Chairman of its Governing Board until 1990. The second person is **Mr. William O’Neil** who served in the same capacity, with equal energy and resourcefulness, for 14 years.  Both deserve great credit for the pivotal role they have played in helping to pilot IMLI, through hard and difficult times, to the point where, today, it can face the future, and the start of a new academic year, with confidence and anticipation. The Secretary-General then concluded by wishing the staff and students of IMLI an enjoyable and fruitful year.

The Director then invited Mr. Lino Vasallo, Malta’s Permanent Representative to IMO to address the audience. Mr. Vasallo gave a brief and heartfelt account of IMLI’s development over the last twenty years. He recalled the discussions for the setting up of the Institute in Malta and commended Professor Attard’s vision in the establishment of the Institute. He advised the students that IMLI is a centre of excellence which requires their utmost dedication. He told them, however, that no matter how hard the work, how big the efforts they must make during this academic year, the reward of culminating their studies at IMLI with success cannot be easily explained, but they will understand it when they hold the degree in their hands.

The Director then closed the Ceremony by thanking the distinguished guests for their presence in the Inauguration Ceremony. The guests included Mr. Neil Frank Ferrer (First Secretary and Consul, Alternate permanent Representative of the Philippines to the IMO), Mr. Fu Zhimin (Counsellor of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China), Captain Emad Islam (Deputy Secretary of the Mediterranean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control) and a delegation of the Chilean Maritime Administration represented by Vice-Admiral Edmundo Gonzalez Robles (Director General of the Maritime Territory and Merchant Marine), Captain Ivan Valenzuela Bosne (Head of the International Affairs Department of the Directorate General of the Maritime Territory and Merchant Marine) and Lieutenant Senior Grade Carolina Riesco Fuenzalida (Lawyer of the Legal Department of the Directorate General of the Maritime Territory and Merchant Marine).

After the Inauguration Ceremony, the Secretary-General presided over the “IMLI Flag Ceremony” during which IMLI students hoisted their national flags at the Institute premises. This Ceremony was followed by a reception to commemorate the inauguration of the academic year 2008-2009.



**H.E. Efthimios Mitropoulos (IMO Secretary-General),**

**with Professor David Attard (IMLI Director), guests and the 20th generation of IMLI lawyers**

Hereunder follows the Secretary-General’s inaugural address:

**Inauguration of IMLI academic year**

**Malta, 29 September 2008**

**Address by Efthimios E. Mitropoulos,**

**Secretary-General, International Maritime Organization**

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, IMLI staff and students,

It is both an honour and a pleasure for me to be here today and to be able to say a few words to you as you embark on another academic year at the Institute – and also to welcome the new class of students who join this great institution. It will, as ever, be a year of hard work and difficult challenges both for students and for staff; but this is no more than you are accustomed to, and I have every confidence that IMLI’s 20th academic year will see yet another highly successful chapter written in the history of this fine academic institution.

IMLI was established by IMO in 1988 to ensure that governments would have trained maritime legal experts available to incorporate the often complex international maritime legal framework of rules, codes and standards into national legislation. The Institute has, in fact, more than fulfilled its early promise, having become an indispensable part of IMO’s success, with its graduates going on to make a major contribution to the attainment of the Organization’s goals and objectives.  And to remind ourselves, in London, of these excellent attributes, we commemorated IMLI’s twenty years, last June, with the unveiling of a beautiful painting of the Institute, which now hangs proudly at the entrance of IMO’s Main Hall.

As you know, the primary aims of IMO are to bring about genuine improvements in the safety and security of international shipping and in the prevention of environmental pollution from ships. Its success in achieving these goals depends, to a considerable extent, on skilled maritime lawyers. This is because developing the international regulatory framework that can yield such improvements is only one half of the story – the other is the highly specialized job of drafting the necessary practical and enforceable national laws without which the internationally agreed standards simply would not be effective. That is where IMLI has such an important role to play.

Take, for example, the measures currently being developed by IMO to address the emission of greenhouse gases from ships. Once adopted, these will represent a crucial element of IMO’s endeavours in the field of environmental protection and will be an important milestone for IMO’s Marine Environment Protection Committee and its subsidiary bodies. But whatever measures are adopted will, of course, have to be integrated into the national legislative framework of as many of the IMO Member States as possible in order that they can effectively produce the desired beneficial impact on the global environment.

This example has particular resonance here, in Malta, since this forthcoming academic year will coincide with the 20th anniversary of the initiative taken by the Maltese Government, at the United Nations General Assembly, to identify and declare climate change to be a common concern for all humankind.  Indeed, it was IMLI’s very own Professor Attard, then teaching international law at the University of Malta, who, in 1988, first suggested to Malta’s Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Edward Fenech-Adami, that coordinated effort was the only way to address the growing concern over climate change. This initiative culminated in the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and it is under that Convention and its Kyoto Protocol that IMO has its mandate to pursue the limitation or reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases from ships. Let me take this opportunity to commend Professor Attard on his foresight all those years ago and to reassure him, and everyone else, of IMO’s continuing and firm commitment in this regard.

It is a sign of the times, and one that should bring great satisfaction to all concerned, that this year, out of 37 new students, 22 are female lawyers.  This can be looked upon as an important and praiseworthy achievement, bearing in mind that one of the provisions in IMLI’s statutes states that “to encourage equitable participation by women, 50 per cent of the places in each regular course of the Institute shall be reserved for women candidates, provided that the necessary numbers of women candidates with the required entrance qualifications are available for each particular course”; and also taking into account the wider background of the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, one of which is to achieve gender equality in education.  Moreover, this remarkable achievement also contributes directly to the central tenet of IMO’s technical co-operation and women-in-development programmes, which is capacity building and the strengthening of human resources.

In the shipping industry, the days when it was reasonable to assume that a ship’s captain or, indeed, any other officer or rating would automatically be a man are long behind us and the same also applies, I am pleased to say, in the world of maritime law.

Ladies and gentlemen, IMLI’s progress over the years has been dependent upon the continuing support received from donors, who have contributed either to the Institute’s general fund or by the provision of fellowships, and I would like to take this opportunity to add my thanks to them for this most valuable assistance.  I look forward to a continuation of this vital aid, and I am confident that the consistently high quality of the graduates, which is widely recognized and acknowledged, will encourage additional development partners and recipient countries to contribute to the excellent training that is being offered here in Malta.

I would also, once again, thank the Government of Malta for its far-sightedness and generosity in agreeing to host the Institute over twenty years ago – an arrangement which, I am certain, has been mutually beneficial. We are also especially indebted to the Maritime Authority of Malta for its continued assistance. The positive impact of this institution on the international maritime community is immeasurable and is greatly appreciated by all Members of IMO.

Of course, the continuing smooth functioning of the Institute is due, in no small measure, to the tremendous commitment of its able and dedicated faculty and administrative staff, and to the high standard of teaching given by the large number of visiting lecturers who provide their services voluntarily. To those who willingly give their time and expertise, I offer my sincere gratitude. And to Professor Attard, who provides such able and admirable leadership, I once again extend my immense appreciation.

Finally, in this year of anniversaries for both IMO and for IMLI, it would be remiss of me to overlook this opportunity to pay tribute to two individuals, without whom we might not be here today, looking forward to the start of yet another academic year.

First, **Dr. C.P. Srivastava**, whose vision, foresight and determination to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries in matters related to their performance under IMO instruments, gave birth, first to the World Maritime University in Malmö, and then to IMLI. Following its inception, he served IMLI as Chairman of its Governing Board until 1990, when he passed the baton to the second person to whom I wish to pay tribute, my distinguished predecessor at IMO, **Mr. William O’Neil**.  He, in turn, served in the same capacity, with equal energy and resourcefulness, for 14 years.  Both deserve great credit for the pivotal role they have played in helping to pilot IMLI, through hard and difficult times, to the point where, today, it can face the future, and the start of a new academic year, with confidence and anticipation.

It remains only for me to wish the staff and students of IMLI an enjoyable and fruitful year here in these most pleasant of surroundings; and I look forward to seeing you again, in due course, when, as I am sure it will, all your hard work brings the appropriate reward.

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\*\* For further information please contact Ms. Elda Belja (Editor, IMLI e-News) at publications@imli.org