



IMO CELEBRATES WORLD MARITIME DAY 2012

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) celebrated on Thursday, 27 September 2012 World Maritime Day. This year the theme for World Maritime Day was “**IMO: One hundred years after the Titanic**”.

In the aftermath of the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, in which more than 1,500 people lost their lives, the international community’s concern on safety of life at sea led to the adoption, two years later, of the first International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). The 1914 version of the Convention was gradually superseded, respectively, by SOLAS 1929, SOLAS 1948, SOLAS 1960 (the first adopted under the auspices of IMO, then known as IMCO) and SOLAS 1974. SOLAS 1974 is still in force today, amended and updated many times.

This year's World Maritime Day theme provided an opportunity to take stock of the developments in maritime safety since that disaster and to examine which areas of ship safety should be given priority in the years to come.

The IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) fully supports IMO’s work in the field of maritime safety and the fulfillment of the Organization’s objectives. Law of Maritime Safety is one of the key subjects within the Shipping Law curriculum of IMLI’s LL.M. programme.



Mr. Koji Sekimizu (IMO Secretary-General) and the Class of 2011/2012 during IMLI's 23rd Graduation Ceremony

As the IMO Secretary-General, Mr. Koji Sekimizu noted in his message to the IMLI graduands of 2011/2012, *“To ensure that shipping is as safe, secure, efficient and environment-friendly as it can be requires a truly global regulatory framework. Internationally applied measures adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) provide that framework, but the drafting of IMO Conventions and their subsequent enactment into national law are complex and highly specialized tasks. They require special people, people with the highest possible level of relevant expertise and a deep knowledge of the subject matter.*”

Education holds the key. Established in 1988, under the auspices of the IMO and in conjunction with the Government of Malta, the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) has developed into the world's leading international centre for the training of specialists in maritime law. It provides the maritime world with an invaluable human resource, and contributes generally to the development and dissemination of knowledge and expertise in international maritime law.”

The World Maritime Day Parallel Event will be held in the Kingdom of Bahrain from 17 to 18 October 2012.

IMLI is hereby reproducing for its IMLI e-news readers the message that the IMO Secretary-General, Mr. Koji Sekimizu prepared especially for this occasion.

World Maritime Day 2012

Message from Koji Sekimizu, Secretary-General, International Maritime Organization

On 14 April 1912, the White Star liner ‘Titanic’ was transformed in a few short hours from the world’s most celebrated ship into a name forever associated with disaster.

Many ships have sunk – too many – but few have had the lasting impact of the seemingly invulnerable Titanic.

The Titanic tragedy prompted the major shipping nations of the world, at that time, to take decisive action to address maritime safety. This led to the adoption, two years later, of the first-ever International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea and, ultimately, to the establishment of IMO itself.

Today, much updated and revised, SOLAS is still the most important international treaty addressing maritime safety. And, as 2012 marks the 100th year since that ill-fated ship foundered, the IMO Council decided that the World Maritime Day theme for this year should be “IMO: One hundred years after the Titanic”.

Since its formation, IMO’s main task has been to develop and maintain a comprehensive regulatory framework for international shipping. Its mandate was originally limited to safety-related issues, but subsequently this remit has been expanded to embrace environmental protection, legal matters, technical co-operation, issues that affect the overall efficiency of shipping and maritime security, including piracy and armed robbery against ships.

The direct output of IMO’s regulatory work is a comprehensive body of international conventions, supported by literally hundreds of guidelines and recommendations that, between them, govern just about every facet of the shipping industry – from the drawing board to the scrapyard. The most important result of all this is that shipping today is safer, cleaner, more efficient and more secure than at any time in the past.

But each new generation of vessels brings fresh challenges and, regrettably, accidents still occur, reinforcing the need for continual improvement. Our efforts to promote maritime safety, not least of passenger ships, will never stop. We should respond quickly to accidents and we must be proactive.

To this end, we are planning to hold a two-day symposium at IMO Headquarters, in London, in conjunction with IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee next June, on the “Future of Ship Safety”. The idea is to go beyond the current safety issues under the Committee and rigorously consider the future of maritime safety. The objective is for the discussions to contribute to the future advancement of the Organization’s maritime safety policy.

What separates the passenger and cruise ship industry from the rest of shipping is the unique nature of its cargo – hundreds and thousands of people. The lives of thousands of people are in the hands of the ship's management, the captain and crew and the operating staff. I therefore hope that this sector, in particular, will take the opportunity to lead the way, because "safety" is its main product – not comfort, entertainment or leisure. Without safety, the industry will not survive, let alone sustain its growth; and real safety does not result simply as a consequence of regulation-compliance.

Some 20 years ago, the International Safety Management Code, adopted by IMO, represented a step-change in the establishment of a safety culture in shipping. The time has now come to generate another step-change. This will not be achieved through legislative measures alone. We must generate a new impetus in shipping to go beyond compliance with regulations and explore industry-wide mechanisms to ensure the safety culture is embedded throughout the entire industry.

So this year, as we look back on that pivotal disaster 100 years ago, I urge IMO Member Governments and the shipping industry as a whole to refresh their determination to improve and enhance the safety of passenger shipping today, and into the future.

** If you do not want to receive IMLI e-News in future, please return this message to the above address with request to DELETE in the subject field.*

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