



THE VALEDICTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE INSTITUTE'S 25TH ANNUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY

During the Institute's 25th annual Graduation Ceremony held on 7 June 2014, the Valedictory Address on behalf of the IMLI Class of 2014 was delivered by Mr. Richard Adjei-Frimpong, a graduate from Ghana. The ceremony which was presided over by Mr. Koji Sekimizu, IMO Secretary-General and Chairman of the IMLI Governing Board, was graced by several distinguished personalities.



Mr. Richard Adjei-Frimpong delivering the Valedictory Address on behalf of the IMLI Class of 2014 at the Institute's 25th Graduation Ceremony

In his Valedictory Address, Mr. Adjei-Frimpong noted that as the Institute celebrates its 25th year of existence, it has indeed fulfilled the mission and purpose for which it was created and that is becoming an international centre for the training of specialists in maritime law and the development and dissemination of knowledge and expertise in the international maritime legal regime with emphasis on international regulations and procedures to further the purpose of IMO.

Addressing his fellow graduands, he stated that the true test that provides a demonstration that they are a proud recipients of IMLI's LL.M. and Advanced Diplomas respectively, is about to begin. He further added that he was convinced that the presence of their relatives and friends at the Ceremony was not only to see them receiving decorated parchments adorned with silk ribbons and share in their joys, but their presence also affirms the belief they have in the graduant's newly acquired knowledge and expertise.

Mr. Adjei-Frimpong proudly concluded that his colleagues and himself were now fully equipped to join the cream of illustrious IMLI alumni who are committed to serving the rule of international maritime law and thereby effecting the desired change in the nautical world.

The Valedictory Address by Mr. Adjei-Frimpong is recaptured below:

Your Excellency Mr Koji Sekimizu, Secretatary General of IMO and Chairman of the IMLI Governing Board,

Professor David Attard, Director of IMLI,

Excellencies,

Hon Ministers and Representatives of the Government of Malta,

Distinguished Professors and Lecturers of IMLI both Resident and Visiting,

My Fellow Graduands,

Parents, Spouses and other Relations of Graduands,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the occasion of the graduation ceremony for the IMLI Class of 2013/2014, permit me, speaking on behalf of the class, to pay glowing tribute to the founding fathers and mothers of this prestigious institution. That procreative seed of knowledge which they sewed in blooming soils a quarter of a century ago has been nurtured into maturity to bear enviable fruits of academic repute and today we assemble here to harvest another batch of the fruits. The vision of the originators of the IMLI idea lives on and continues to leave footprints in the sands of our time. We salute their creativity and generative thinking.

Permit me also, to pay tribute of equal measure, to the current crop of torchbearers, whose visionary leadership, resilience, hardwork and selfless devotion to duty have put IMLI on a pedestal and imbued in it a capacity to churn out men and women of excellent expertise in various fields of maritime law. These torchbearers have shunned mediocrity and championed academic fineness. They have agreed with Theodore Roosevelt that:

“For better it is to dare mighty things to win glorious triumph, even though chequered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the grey twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.”

If today, the name of IMLI is written in gold and not in charcoal, then it is on account of the strength and fortitude of these industrious men and women counting of course on the goodwill and support of well-meaning institutions and governments.

We applaud the dauntlessness of the Governing Board and of the Director, lecturers management and staff of this noble Institute. We also extol the ground-breaking support of the Government and people of Malta.

We as well salute the goodwill and sacrifice of the array of donors, contributors and sponsors of the whole IMLI adventure, to mention in particular, the IMO, The Nippon Foundation and the Lloyd’s Register Foundation who generously continue to provide sponsorship to government officials.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, our graduation ceremony this year is a watershed not only in our academic lives as graduands, but also, perhaps more importantly, in the trajectory of IMLI.

IMLI celebrates 25 years of its birth this year and the question of whether the institution has, a quarter of century down the line, achieved its mandate wholly or even partly becomes a legitimate one.

Your excellency, if the mission of IMLI was to be an international centre for the training of specialists in maritime law and the development and dissemination of knowledge and expertise in the international maritime legal regime with emphasis on international regulations and procedures to further the purpose of IMO, then we contend devoid of equivocation that IMLI has paid its dues.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, telling and re-telling the IMLI success story defies boredom. Today, the graduates produced by IMLI have surpassed the force of reckoning. In many developing economies and indeed, in developed ones, IMLI graduates stand tall, come across as stalwarts and are the benchmarks by which excellence is judged. Not only have they excelled in the various fields of maritime legal endeavour, but they have nourished and enriched the building blocks of maritime governance and have oftentimes led the way for the transformation of their maritime legal domains.

IMLI graduates have assumed positions of trust and influence and have acquitted themselves with distinction as Admiralty Judges, professors in renowned institutions of learning, cabinet ministers, drafters of maritime law instruments, private legal practitioners handling intricate and delicate maritime commercial law litigation on behalf of their clients and have provided many other services that time will not permit me to recount here. Yet many others are international maritime commercial arbitrators, heads of various maritime administrations, some representing their countries at the IMO with others heading some of its critical committees.

Your excellency, at the risk of personalizing this aspect of my delivery, but supposedly, for the superior purpose of exemplifying a bit of the IMLI success story, I stand before you as a judge of a developing country. I came to IMLI a novice in maritime law. Today, IMLI has trained and equipped me more than enough, and I say in a soul of humility but in a spirit of pride that I go back to my country filled with real expertise in maritime law to do my part in fulfillment of the vision behind IMLI. Indeed IMLI has overpaid its dues.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, in October last year when from our different jurisdictions, we headed here to pursue our course, the virtue in the IMLI success story was that which kindled our spirits for good things to come. Even as we graduate today, the thoughts of IMLI success story predominates our minds and hearts and we find in it, a monument erected to host a shining beacon to illuminate the paths of our voyage for years to come. We owe the protagonists of this story a debt of gratitude the liability of which will hang on our necks for many years to come.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, on this great day of ours, do not begrudge us if upon receipt of our awards, we saunter and flaunt about with a feeling of egoistic achievement. For, we have not had it a tea party.



The IMLI class of 2014 taking the oath of allegiance at the Institute's 25th Graduation Ceremony

At the beginning of the programme, naturally without knowing the intricacies of studying at IMLI, things appeared difficult and confusing especially for some of us who had severed any bond with a classroom for many years. Thanks however, to what I prefer to call the IMLI dynamism. The well-structured course delivery, starting with the preliminary lessons was soon to calm us down and gradually warm us into the mainstream maritime law subjects.

Four and half hours of intensive lectures spread through the day five days in a week coupled with various written assignments and intermittent presentations would definitely be an arduous task especially so when those had to compete for time and energy with the compulsory written dissertations and the legislative drafting projects. But we learnt from Henry Thoreau that:

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavours to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success unexpected in common hours.”

Your Excellency, along with the backbreaker academic work, came a proficient and top-notch lectureship to balance. Our team of lecturers both resident and visiting exhibited superior intellectual prowess mixed with real practical know-how. Those virtues were driven by real show of commitment to duty, spirits of voluntarism and selflessness to ensure that we do not emerge half-baked experts in the field of maritime law.

In Professor Attard, we found a thorough-bred intellectual of immense international repute, a powerhouse of rich practical experience in maritime law issues and indeed a walking encyclopedia of the law of the sea.

In Dr. Martinez, we found a reservoir of deep intellect cutting across varied subjects of maritime law in particular the anatomy of the law on Limitation of liability, his propensity.

In Ms Belja, we found a rare brain power to deliver researched information, a teacher of amazing passion who found every question beautiful. Her favourite adage was that repetition is the mother of annoyance but father of knowledge.

In Mr Hamza, we found a hardworking intellectual, an indubitable force in the field of maritime security, constantly fuming zeal. He would suffer sleepless nights to give comprehensive slides which could render any further reading unattractive.

In Ms Jalloh, we found a burgeoning highbrowed teacher of formidable analytical mind. She would prefer interactive approach to lecturing, throwing issues on the floor to engage intellectual debates.

Your Excellency, the tall list of visiting professors and experts make the giving of detailed impressions of each circumstantially impossible, but we believe we sum it all up when we say that it is the awesome choreography of the various topics and seminars from both resident and visiting professors and experts which has produced in us the craft and knack in international maritime law which we launch today.

On this note distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, help us in saluting these illustrious caravan of intellectuals and experts. To our noble teachers, we say bravo for a job well executed. We owe every inch of our expertise in maritime law to you. We say again and again that keep up the excellent work, for we believe, IMLI is, because you are. I recount the following words of my cheerful village teacher years ago to you:

“I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illumined by the lightning-life of the mind, then teaching is the finest work I know.”

We believe with us, you found teaching the finest work you know.

Your Excellency, it will be remiss of me, indeed an unpardonable one at that if I do not recognize the constructive instrumentality of the non- teaching department of the Institute. From the administration, descending to the library through the reception down to the laundry, we enjoyed every bit of our engagement with you. We celebrate you and will always remember you.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is not only the flagship academic pillars of IMLI that we will remember. We will always have fond memories of the numerous social events, the trips to the ports, the luncheons, the receptions, the country profile presentations, the birth day cake presentations and above all the customary line ups the consistency of which would stretch your wardrobes to the point that you wear the same set of suits and shoes over and over again. These were all symptoms of the IMLI dynamism which propped up our social life on campus.

Your Excellency, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, at this juncture, permit me to share a few words with my colleagues. My brothers and sisters, from over 30 countries of different socio-cultural backgrounds, we became family, lived under one roof and shared many facilities in common. Today, the journey drifts to an end. The gratifying feeling of being conferred with honours, clearly competes with the pain of parting ways in a melancholic fashion. But as we ventilate this feeling, let us remember that the real job is yet to commence. Nelson Mandela of blessed memory in the closing chapters of his inspiring work *Long Walk to Freedom* wrote

“When I walked out of prison that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. Some say that has now been achieved. But I know that is not the case. The truth is that we are not yet free, we have merely achieved the freedom to be free... We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road.....The true test of our freedom is just beginning”

Distinguished colleagues, the true test that provides a demonstration that we are proud recipients of IMLI LLM and Advanced diplomas is just about to begin. It is my strong conviction that our loved ones, relatives and friends are not here today only for the commonplace ritual of seeing us collect decorated parchments adorned with silk ribbons and share in our joy. They are also here to witness this occasion because they believe that with our newly acquired knowledge and expertise, we are going to add to the cream of illustrious IMLI alumni to cause the desired change in the nautical world.

We are aware that a major challenge of the industry is to get States to ratify and implement the numerous critical international conventions and other instruments to enhance safety, security and efficiency in the industry. No wonder the theme for this year’s world maritime day has been

devoted to this critical subject. The theme, “*IMO Conventions, effective implementation*” should come as watchword to us. We all, are now experts in legislative drafting skills and implementation modalities. I believe no one better than IMLI graduates can better propagate this gospel to our governments and institutions. Wherever we may find ourselves, let us disseminate the message and ensure it draws the needed attention. Let us discharge the IMLI mandate in our respective countries and institutions.

Even where there seems to be no opportunity for us to act, let us create one ourselves. Let us remember the wisdom in George Bernard Shaw’s statement that:

“The people who get on in this world are those who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can’t find them, make them.”

We started this academic adventure from the baselines, we have transited through the zones to arrive on the high seas of knowledge. Let us dedicate this expertise to the industry to explore and exploit conserve and manage for the common benefit of mankind.

In all we do, let us not forget IMLI, for history is being made in IMLI and we must write our chapter now.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

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