

IMLI^e-News

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THE HONOURABLE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF MALTA VISITS IMLI

The Institute had the pleasure of welcoming The Honourable Dr. George Vella (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta) on Thursday, 17 December. The Honourable Minister was met on his arrival by Professor David Attard (Director of IMLI), who introduced him to the IMLI Class of 2015-2016.



The Honourable George Vella (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta) meeting the students of the IMLI Class of 2015-2016

Professor Attard stated that he was very pleased to welcome again the Honourable Minister to the Institute. He noted The Honourable Minister's dedication and attention to maritime issues long before assuming his position as Minister for Foreign Affairs. He recalled his active involvement in environmental issues at the aftermath of the major oil spills of the *Torrey Canyon* and *Amoco Cadiz* and his substantial contribution to the development of the Maltese legal framework in the areas of the protection of the marine environment.



Professor David Attard (Director of IMLI) and The Honourable Dr. George Vella (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta) with the IMLI Class of 2015-2016

The Honourable Minister, in his speech, shared his experience of participating in two major summits which were hosted in Malta. The first summit was the Valletta Summit on Migration held between 11 and 12 November 2015 which brought together European and African Heads of State and Governments in an effort to strengthen cooperation and address the current challenges of migration. The Honourable Minister noted that several key issues discussed during the summit related to migrant smuggling and trafficking and that all countries agreed to an action plan and political declaration to prevent and fight migrant smuggling and trafficking. With regards to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which was held between 27 and 29 November 2015, The Honourable Minister stated that climate change featured high in the meeting agenda. He further explained that out of the 53 Commonwealth States, 32 are Small Island States, which have their own particular strengths and opportunities as well as vulnerabilities in addressing climate change. Other country members took the opportunity of learning from these small countries' experience in addressing the challenges caused by climate change. The Honourable Minister noted with concern that, should the challenges not be addressed, climate change will affect substantially the sustainability of the sea water and its diversity.

The Honourable Minister concluded his speech by welcoming the IMLI students to Malta and wishing them all the best in their studies.

Following the speech, The Honourable Minister was interviewed by the IMILI e-news Editor.

Good Morning Honourable Minister, we are very pleased to welcome you here at IMLI. In your opinion, what are the main challenges facing the maritime sector in Malta?

All aspects on maritime policy are important. With Malta being a maritime country, its major activities on trade are through the sea and tourism. These are all very important sectors which, in turn, rely on the condition of the sea. This obviously reflects on the fact that we have to safeguard the quality of the surrounding water, control pollution and at the same time preserve and protect our small fishing industry. It is also important for us to address climate change issues in Mediterranean, especially the rise in the sea level and temperature changes.

Another big challenge for the country is to try to maximise the resources that are available but still unexploited in the continental shelf. It is a challenge because we are fully aware that we are ‘sitting’ on these resources, which although not specifically beneath us, are found in areas that we can legitimately claim. The exploration and exploitation of these resources depends heavily on the agreement between countries on the maritime boundaries; which entails diplomatic discussions with our neighbour countries. These are major issues that can have a big impact on our economy, should we find enough hydrocarbon or gas.

Thank you very much for your detailed explanation. Honourable Minister, what do you think is the role of IMLI in the maritime industry?

IMLI is an established Institution which is highly contributing to the reputation Malta already enjoys in the maritime industry. We are proud to host an Institution of such high standing which serves as the venue where Government legal advisors, practitioners, diplomats and many others engaged in the maritime industry enhance their knowledge and prepare to serve the rule of International Maritime Law.

Thank you very much Honourable Minister for your time and thank you for visiting IMLI.

** All photos courtesy of Reuben Piscopo – DOI*

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