

IMLI *e*-News

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IMLI GRADUAND DELIVERS VALEDICTORY ADDRESS AT THE 28TH ANNUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE INSTITUTE

Ms. Sunita Shenelle Roberts (Trinidad and Tobago) delivered the Valedictory Address on behalf of the graduands during the 28th Annual Graduation Ceremony of the IMO International Maritime Law Institute on 27 May 2017.



Ms. Sunita Shenelle Roberts (Trinidad and Tobago) delivering the Valedictory Address on behalf of the IMLI Class of 2016-2017

Ms. Roberts began her address by expressing gratitude for the honour given to her to deliver the valedictory address on behalf of her colleagues. She expressed appreciation to all the sponsors (the International Maritime Organisation, the Nippon Foundation, and the Lloyd's Register

Foundation) and while thanking them for their generosity, she stated that without their intervention most of them would not be present to witness and share the proud and historic moment of graduation. She also expressed appreciation for the assistance rendered by the Maltese Government and its endearing citizenry who have been so hospitable to them during their academic sojourn at IMLI. She thanked the staff of IMLI, particularly Professor Attard whom she referred to as an inspiration to her and her colleagues.

Ms. Roberts Valedictory Address reflected the theme of “World Maritime Day” for the year 2017 is “*connecting ships, ports and people.*” She mentioned that this theme calls for a more integration in the maritime and logistics sectors from a policy as well as a practical perspective. She informed the gathering that IMLI’s Programme on Master of Science in International Maritime Law and Logistics (IMLLog) in collaboration with Kühne Logistics University (KLU) in Hamburg, among other programmes was in line with this vision.



A Cross-section of the of the Graduands

On the Cultural diversity in the student body, Ms. Roberts explained that the IMLI Class of 2016-2017 hail from approximately 30 different countries with each of them facing unique maritime issues which pose a threat to either the stability, health or overall well-being of our individual nations. He urged her colleagues to return to their respective countries to plough back towards making the world an environmentally better place.

The Valedictory Address of Ms. Roberts is reproduced hereunder:

Good Morning to all in attendance. My name is Sunita Roberts hailing from the beautiful twin islands of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago set in the wonderful West Indies. This is truly an auspicious occasion since today marks the culmination of nine months of intense, passionate studies and hard work. I stand before you humbled, yet honoured to have been chosen to deliver this year's valedictory speech on behalf of all my fellow graduates. To my colleagues, join me in welcoming the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organisation, Mr. Kitack Lim and the Director of The International Maritime Law Institute, Professor David Attard, you are truly an inspiration.

It is important to express our deep gratitude to all our esteemed sponsors, without whose unstinted support most of us would not be here today sharing this proud and historic moment. To the International Maritime Organisation, the Nippon Foundation, the Lloyd's Register Foundation - thank you for believing in the students you sponsored and making the investment in our future and the future of International maritime law. We are extremely grateful to you for making this moment a reality.

We are also very appreciative of the assistance rendered by the Maltese Government and its endearing citizenry who have been so hospitable to us over the past nine months.

A sincere vote of thanks goes out to our dedicated lecturers here at IMLI, who worked tirelessly to ensure that we received the best training in the areas of maritime legislative drafting and legal analysis. With their patience and wide array of knowledge, these lecturers were able to mould us and set us on the right path to making a difference in our respective homelands, in general, and in the maritime arena, in particular.

We were all fortunate to witness and benefit from their daily conscientious efforts in an attempt to ensure that we understood the important and at times quite complex principles encompassed in the realm of Maritime Law.

This gratitude does not just extend only to the academic aspects but also in a personal capacity, as I might say that the IMLI staff is our newly found family.

Each of them, in their own way took measures to ensure our comfort and happiness during our stay here in Malta and for that on behalf of the class of 2016/2017 we wish to exclaim a resounding THANK YOU and to you Professor Norman Martinez, Ms. Elda Belja, Mr. Buba Bojang, Ms. Ramat Jalloh and Ms. Tetty Lubis for your contributions to our education and to our lives. To Ms. Vera Cole, our librarian, thank you for always being ready to assist us with our research. To the other support staff thank you for working so hard behind the scenes to make sure everything here at IMLI runs smoothly. We are also grateful to our class President Ms. Tina Awor Owor for actively seeking our interests this past year.

To begin this address, I find it prudent to remind my colleagues of the reason for which we have embarked on this journey here at IMLI. For most of us, and I hope for all of us, this graduation

ceremony does not simply signify the successful completion of an LL.M degree, but instead, marks the beginning of a long career striving to achieve the aims of the organisation of which we now form an integral part- the International Maritime Organisation.

As the largest graduating class in IMLI's history with representing delegates from almost every corner of the globe, it is clear that we are walking away with much more than an LL.M certificate, we are taking with us fond memories and of course, lifelong fellowships. We now form part of a formidable network of maritime professionals who will simultaneously work in our own respective capacities towards the overarching aim of the IMO, that is, to achieve cleaner oceans and safer shipping.

During one of our first encounters with our dearest Director David Attard, he emphasised the importance of networking, not only amongst ourselves as IMLI graduates, but also the countless visiting lecturers, professors and guests with whom we have had the pleasure of interacting with over the past academic year. It is Director Attard's belief that only through unity can we truly make a difference on a global scale.

So while it is true that after these months of hard work, we are deserving of this proud and empowering moment, I wish to point out that it also imposes upon us a newly found grave and weighty responsibility. On the first day here at IMLI, we all vowed to serve the rule of International Maritime Law, and that we shall.

The theme of "World Maritime Day" for the year 2017 is "*connecting ships, ports and people*" which calls for more integration in the maritime and logistics sectors – both from a policy and a practical perspective. In tandem with this vision, IMLI has proudly completed its first year delivering a Master of Science in International Maritime Law and Logistics (IMLLog) in collaboration with Kühne Logistics University (KLU) in Hamburg.

This innovative dual program marries both logistics and legal elements over a two year period. By virtue of the introduction of this subject, the entire 2016/17 class was privileged to have been introduced to the principles of logistics. We learnt how logistics impacts every facet of our lives as well as the deleterious effects that follow when a piece of the link goes missing.

As we know, ninety percent of world trade is carried by sea. Accordingly, having industry experts is of course important and that is why we have seen the emergence of degree courses merging both maritime transport and logistics. However, IMLI has taken this further by incorporating knowledge of maritime law, transport and logistics into one to create an all-encompassing programme equipping students with a unique and wide-ranging knowledge of "behind the scenes" operations.

This past March, The Honourable Secretary-General of IMO delivered a speech in Panama, in which he highlighted a number of strategic directions for the period 2018 - 2023. The first came as no surprise, as it encompasses the very reason, we are all gathered here today, that is, in recognition of the importance of the effective implementation of these international standards.

The efforts of the IMO have produced more than 50 international treaties relating to a plethora of vital regulatory standards aimed at achieving safer more efficient, sustainable shipping, and cleaner oceans through the adoption of safety standards and various conventions targeting the specific sources of marine pollution. The ultimate achievement would be to witness the uniform application of these standards across the board, from country to country and vessel to vessel. This aim as we have all learnt is far more difficult in reality. The responsibility of implementing these conventions lie squarely on the shoulders of the IMO member states, many of whom, however, have fallen short with regard to implementation.

The late American biologist Rachel Carson once said “it is a curious situation that the sea from which life first arose should now be threatened by the activities by one form of that life, but the sea though changed in a sinister way will continue to exist. The threat is rather a life itself”.



A Cross-section of the Guests at the Graduation Ceremony

This is a curious statement because it shows how protection of the sea indirectly connects to our livelihood as humans and for those of the future. We are now faced with the longstanding challenges caused by human activity and inactivity plaguing our oceans and undeservedly so. However, it is emphasised that it is by no means, too late to invoke change to mitigate the existing damage and avoid future damage if WE act NOW.

The student body - IMLI class of 2016/17 hail from approximately 30 different countries with each of us facing unique maritime issues which pose a threat to either the stability, health or overall well-being of our individual nations.

For example, we have a candidate from the Solomon Islands, who is facing the very real threat of rising sea levels. So far five reef islands have been lost and other islands face severe coastal degradation. It is for countries like these that the goals encapsulated in the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change are the most important. Aimed at strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to adapt to the changes taking place.

We have candidates from States in the East African and West Indian Ocean regions namely, Kenya, Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar who face the very real threat of piracy and the consequential issue of the prosecution of such pirates.

To my Caribbean counterparts, we face the issues of pollution, and the increase of human trafficking; to my colleagues from the African continent the issue of Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is a live one, not to mention the effects of climate change on industries. We even have a candidate hailing from the Kingdom of Lesotho, which as we know is a landlocked country whose interests involve matters such as access to the sea and to the resources found therein.

For the three Filipino candidates, the protection and recognition of the rights of seafarers are paramount as the Philippines remain the top source of seafarers in the world accounting for more than 25 % of the 1.5 million seafarers worldwide.

We also have a colleague hailing from a country with a complete lack of maritime legal framework. The class of 2016/17 has produced the first IMLI graduate from Bosnia and Herzegovina. His presence here is indicative of how the IMLI network is expanding.

It follows that Identifying the shortcomings are just the first step. It is the effective implementation of the Treaties that will make the difference. Thus, the tireless research, long nights and a significant amount of coffee that were employed to produce a piece of legislation implementing an IMO Convention was not in vain. The purpose of this exercise was to equip each and every one of us with the skill to be able to draft and see to the implementation of IMO treaties in our respective countries.

To my colleagues, here we are, at the crossroads and the decision to make the best of what we have learnt here at IMLI is ours. I urge each of us to choose wisely and most vehemently, to return to our individual countries and lead the charge towards making our world an environmentally better place.

With that said, on behalf of the IMLI Class of 2016-2017, I wish to once again extend my heartiest thanks to each and every one of you that has contributed in diverse ways to make today possible and for being here with us to celebrate our success.

I thank you.

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