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IMLI *e*-News

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IMLI GRADUAND DELIVERS THE VALEDICTORY ADDRESS AT THE 30TH ANNUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE INSTITUTE

Ms. Barbara Janka Ujlaki (Luxembourg) delivered the Valedictory Address on behalf of the 2018-2019 graduands during the 30th Annual Graduation Ceremony of the Institute on 15 June 2019.



Ms. Barbara Janka Ujlaki (Luxembourg) delivering the Valedictory Address on behalf of the IMLI Class of 2018-2019

Ms. Ujlaki began her address by befittingly acknowledging the presence of His Excellency Dr. George Vella (President of the Republic of Malta), Mr. Kitack Lim (Secretary-General, IMO), Professor David Attard (Director, IMLI), the distinguished guests, and her fellow graduands. While acknowledging the presence of the President of Malta, Ms. Ujlaki thanked him for his long-standing interest in IMLI as a Foreign Minister as well as an eminent visiting lecturer. On behalf of all the graduands she expressed sincere gratitude to the IMO Secretary-General and his Organization for allowing them to specialize in international maritime law and to study the great corpus of IMO legislation which is instrumental in securing safer shipping and cleaner oceans.

She extended her thanks to the Government of Malta for its hospitality and for all the support it has provided them with. She seized also the opportunity to thank all other generous sponsors, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta, the IMO, The Nippon Foundation, Lloyds Register Foundation and the ITF Seafarers' Trust for placing their trust in this year's graduands and for enabling them to participate in the programmes offered by the Institute.

Ms. Ujlaki recognized the sterling work of the staff of IMLI, particularly of Professor Attard, whom she referred to as an inspiration for all of them, the hallmark of excellence and wisdom. In the name of all the graduands she expressed gratefulness and indebtedness for his leadership, guidance and opportunity to learn from him and most of all, for believing in them.

Ms. Ujlaki's Valedictory Address also tackled the importance of the World Maritime Day theme of "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community" for the year 2019. She emphasized that IMLI was the first institution in the UN system to have reserved 50% of places in its programmes to deserving women and which has relentlessly promoted gender equality ever since.



Cross – section of Graduands

Ms. Ujlaki concluded her speech by praising IMLI as an invaluable experience and a major milestone in the careers of all her fellow graduands, which has instilled in them the required knowledge to further enhance and promote the standards of safety and security in international shipping and to push forward the IMO strategy to safeguard our oceans. She encouraged the graduands, whom she referred to as friends, to follow their dreams, listen to their hearts and forge their path to success through the strong network of friendship they have built during the year.

The Valedictory Address of Ms. Ujlaki is reproduced hereunder:

Your Excellency, Mr. President of Malta, Your Excellency, IMO Secretary-General, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Professor David Attard, Director of IMLI, Distinguished Professors and Lecturers of IMLI both Resident and Visiting, Distinguished Guests, Fellow Graduands, my friends:

It is my honour and privilege to deliver the Valedictory Address on behalf of the IMLI class 2018-2019. Today my friends, we have successfully passed Port State Control and we are now ready to sail into our future.

First of all I would like to express how delighted we are that Your Excellency, the President of Malta has found the time to come to our graduation and to share the joy with us on our finest day in the IMLI calendar. It is my understanding that Your Excellency has expressed a long-standing interest in IMLI as foreign Minister as well as an eminent visiting lecturer. Therefore it is a double privilege to welcome you today as head of state of Malta.

On behalf of all the graduands, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Malta for your hospitality and for all the support you have provided us with. We appreciate the unique opportunity to live and study maritime law in such a strategic location at the confluence of the major sea lanes linking Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

I would also like to convey to Mr. Kitack Lim, how deeply honoured we feel by your presence today, to mark the conclusion of the 30th academic year of the Institute.

On behalf of the class, I would like to express our immense gratitude to you as Secretary General of the IMO for allowing us to specialize in maritime law and to study the great corpus of IMO legislation which is instrumental in securing safer shipping and cleaner oceans. Without your organization's initiative, such a program would not exist.

I feel this is also the right opportunity to thank all of our generous sponsors, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta, the IMO through the generosity of the Director of the Technical Cooperation Division, the Nippon Foundation, the Lloyds register Foundation and the ITF Seafarers' Trust. We shall be eternally grateful for the trust you have placed on us and for making the impossible possible. Most of us would not be here without your generosity and your faith in our abilities to work toward better ocean governance. We also appreciate that some Governments have not relied on external funding but have found the funding to send their officials to study at IMLI.

Ladies and Gentleman, 30 years down the line, it is without a doubt that IMLI has achieved and exceeded its mandate to educate the future leaders in maritime law and the law of the sea. Legal experts trained at IMLI are now unequivocally recognized all around the world, both in developing and developed countries.

Many of these outstanding alumni are woman, a merit for which IMLI deserve to be applauded for. This year's theme for the World Maritime Day is "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community," through which the IMO has provided a platform to raise awareness of the importance of gender equality, and to highlight the significant contribution of women within the maritime sector. Since introducing in 1988 a policy which encouraged equal participation of deserving female candidates to its programmes, IMLI has remained loyal to its values of promoting gender equality and simply by looking at our class, you notice that more than half of the class are beautiful and inspiring women.

I also feel particularly honoured and humbled to stand before you as a representative of a landlocked State, where the concerns of maritime nations seem far away, and yet we all share the same destiny and depend on the oceans of the world. Not least for the foresight and advocacy of

Dr. Walter Müller of Switzerland, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has perpetuated the rights and interests of landlocked States in the oceans of the world. The high seas are open to all nations of the world, and every State has the right to sail ships under its flag on the high seas. Thus we shall not minimize the importance maritime law plays for landlocked States and how a sound legal framework can effectively contribute to the economic development of developing landlocked States. Therefore I encourage you my friends and colleagues to promote the rights and offer your support to your landlocked neighbours that depend on you.

I myself came to IMLI as a novice in maritime law, but today I feel that IMLI has trained and equipped me with an abundance of knowledge and the capacity to face any legal challenges ahead. I say in a soul of humility but in a spirit of pride that I leave here today filled with real expertise in maritime law to do my part in the fulfilment of the vision behind IMLI.

I wish to praise particularly the invaluable experience we have gained through our maritime legislation drafting projects, that has empowered us to gain the necessary skills to advise our countries on the international regulations adopted by IMO and how to ensure their incorporation and effective implementation into domestic legislation.

I would like to further emphasize how humbled we are by Professor Attard's efforts to provide us the unique opportunity to learn from over 80 distinguished visiting world experts and eminent academics who have come to update us on the latest developments in maritime law, and to share their brilliant insight and talent with us. We were particularly impressed with the workshops we had on human rights at sea and empowering women in maritime law, which brought together impressive personalities. IMLI's emphasis on professional development and networking will be an invaluable asset in our future professional work. If there is a collision involving one of our flag ships, we will not only know the law, but also whom to call.

But of course the program at IMLI would not be what it is if it were not for our outstanding resident lecturers, who put all their energy and passion into teaching us a maximum of knowledge in a minimum amount of time. As a Japanese proverb says,

Better Than A Thousand Days of Diligent Study Is One Day with A Great Teacher.

Here at IMLI we truly had the opportunity to connect with our teachers and learn lessons that no textbook could ever provide. At times we have found ourselves overwhelmed by the intensity of the lectures, but our lecturers were always on the quest to ensure that no man or woman is left behind. For this, we shall forever remain indebted to our lecturers.

We will always cherish Professor Martinez who has taught us how to limit our liability while compartmentalizing, and how to navigate through a legal nightmare in a minefield of claims. As for Ms. Belja, our life coach, who took all of us under her wings even before we set foot on Malta, she has definitely gained superwomen status among all of us. Thanks to her, we shall never forget that in maritime law, safety comes first, and that repetition is the father of annoyance, but the mother of knowledge. We will fondly remember Dr. Bojang as the commander in chief and always keep in mind his advice not to die alone, - or something like that. We would also like to express our gratitude to the three new lecturers at IMLI, Mr. Ruhal, Dr. Jimenez and Ms. Dolic, who have with a refreshing sense of humour contributed and paved our way to success.

Finally, in the name of all the graduands, I wish to express to Professor Attard our eternal gratefulness and indebtedness. You have not only bestowed upon us the privilege of becoming proud IMLI graduands today, but you have also allowed us to thrive under your leadership and guidance. You have extended to us the greatest of all honours: to learn from you, one of the most exceptional and outstanding minds in the world of the law of the sea. Professor Attard, you are an inspiration for all of us, the hallmark of excellence and wisdom, or as Arturo would say: a legend. From the depth of our hearts, we thank you for all the sacrifices you have made for us and most of all, for believing in us.

On a more personal note, I had the great honour to serve as this year's student representative, but I could not have fulfilled this task without the unconditional support of my brilliant colleagues of the student rep committee, Robert, Fara and Kamyla. I also wish to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the administrative and housekeeping staff of IMLI who have relentlessly worked behind the scenes to facilitate our lives here in Malta. Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, my

dear friends, today we have the honour to become part of an alumni network that has greatly nourished the development and transformation of maritime law. We are hoping to follow in our predecessors' footsteps and excel in the various fields of maritime law and the law of the sea, to become the benchmark by which excellence is measured. IMLI marks a major milestone in our careers, a steppingstone from which we will strive to fly high for the rest of our lives. As one of my predecessors has accurately put it, our studies at IMLI was far from a tea party, but we are humbled by our achievements and stand proud before this audience today.

Hailing from all the oceans of the world, - even from States without access to the sea -, IMLI has instilled in us the wisdom that each of us has a role to play in the protection and preservation of our oceans. We strive to enhance and promote standards of safety and security in international shipping, as well as to protect the fragile environment of our oceans. As the real test is about to start, we must endeavour to push forward the IMO strategy to safeguard our oceans. We shall dedicate our work toward better implementation and enforcement mechanisms in shipping, to promote environmentally sound practices and to accept no compromises when it comes to seafarer's work and living conditions. Today we pledge to be loyal ambassadors of the seas and to wear our education at IMLI as a badge of honour.

We have acquired a new perspective on life, not only on an academic but also on a personal level. We have come to IMLI as one person, but we leave as another. We came as strangers, but we are leaving as friends. We have built a strong network of friendships for the rest of our lives and learned priceless lessons from each other. Each and every one of you my friends has an exceptional personality and something unique to contribute to this world. My friends, I wish to thank you for your passion and friendship throughout the year, whether it was during the countless hours in the lecture hall, with a glass of wine in the courtyard or during the numerous country profile presentations where we were wondering whether the food was spicy or not.

As our paths separate today, we depart with the wisdom that despite all our differences, we are more similar than we could have ever imagined. While we have shared both our happiness and overcome our struggles together, we have developed an exceptional sense for culture, cooperation,

humanity and mutual respect. Together we have the power to be the change we want to see in the world. As Mahatma Gandhi has said:

Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny.

When I was asked to deliver this speech today, like many of my predecessors I first had to look up the meaning of the word valedictorian, which is composed of the words 'vale dicere,' saying goodbye. However, today I do not choose to say goodbye to you, but to say we shall meet soon again. I wish to end with a Latin phrase that has motivated me throughout the academic year. It says Astra Inclinant, Sed Non Obligant. The stars incline us, they do not bind us. This is what I wish to all of you my friends from the bottom of my heart, that we follow our dreams, listen to our hearts and forge our own paths to success. Don't allow the thief in your mind called doubt to kill your dreams, since doubt has killed more dreams than failure ever will. Don't surrender, never give up.

My friends, Professor Martinez has warned us times and again not to pop up the champagne too early, but today is the day where we deserve to pop up the champagne.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Long Live IMLI !!!

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