



IMLI DIRECTOR DELIVERS THE WELCOME ADDRESS AT THE 31ST GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE INSTITUTE

Professor David Attard (Director, IMLI) delivered the Welcome Address to the distinguished attendees and graduands at the Institute's 31st Annual Graduation Ceremony held online on 3 September 2020.



Professor David Joseph Attard (Director, IMLI) delivering the Welcome Address

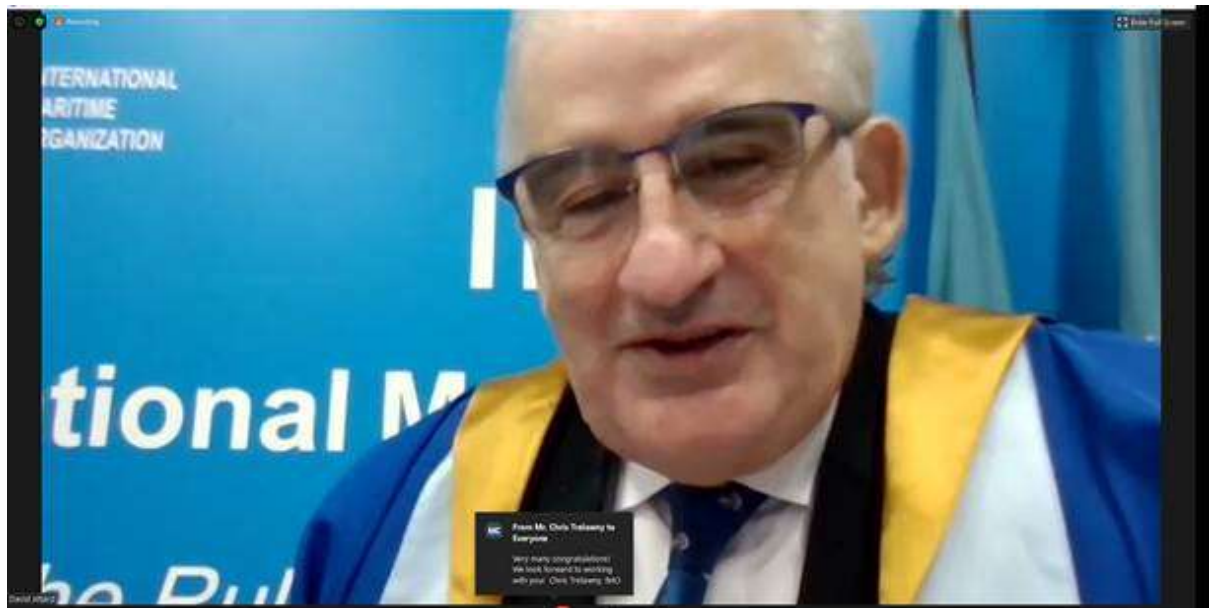
In his Address, Professor Attard thanked His Excellency Mr. Kitack Lim (Secretary-General, IMO) who despite his heavy commitments, graciously agreed to deliver the Graduation Ceremony and expressed deepest appreciation and gratitude to him for the generous interest he has taken in the work and welfare of the Institute.

Professor Attard stated that the graduation ceremony is the culmination of a momentous journey which the Institute, together with its graduands, had to undertake, particularly due to the extraordinary challenges posed by Covid-19. For this reason, he therefore noted that he takes great pleasure in congratulating the graduands for their efforts and achievements.

He saluted the students by saying *“after an academic year of resolute hard work, and living with the Covid-19 threat, you have succeeded in your studies and are now prepared to*

contribute to your country's maritime infrastructure." Professor Attard encouraged them to savour their well-deserved success. Whilst wishing them well in their future endeavours, he also reminded them that they are now IMLI Ambassadors, dedicated to serving the rule of international maritime law.

Reproduced below is the Welcome Address delivered by the Director:



Professor David Attard (Director, IMLI) addressing the graduands

“Dear Graduands,
Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you to IMLI's 31st Graduation Ceremony celebrating the academic success of our Graduands.

At the outset I would like to thank Mr. Kitack Lim, the IMO Secretary-General and Chairman of the IMLI Governing Board, who despite his heavy commitments, he graciously agreed to address us.

Secretary-General, please allow me to take this opportunity to extend to you our deepest appreciation for the generous interest you have taken in our work and the welfare of the Institute.

Today's celebration is the culmination of a momentous journey which the Institute, together with its graduands, had to undertake particularly due to the extraordinary challenges posed by Covid-19. I therefore take great pleasure in congratulating the graduands for their efforts and achievements in these very difficult times. This is a graduation ceremony like no other ever held by the Institute and you are a graduating class like no other. After an academic year of resolute hard work, and living with the Covid-19 threat, you have succeeded in your studies and are now prepared to contribute to your country's maritime infrastructure.

Due to the global health crisis, the Institute migrated to online teaching and supervision in mid-March. The end of year examinations were also held online. Despite the challenges, the Institute sustained its capacity building activities in novel ways to ensure continuity and maintain the highest academic standards, whilst safeguarding the health and safety of its students and staff. It gives me great satisfaction to see how all students successfully completed their studies and are safely back home with their families.

Distinguished Guests,

Over the past three decades, demand for IMLI training has grown – from the 19 participants every year in the 1990s to this year's record number of 51 Master students and six Advanced Diploma students. Moreover, for the first time 2 M.Phil. students are graduating from the joint IMLI-WMU programme. Furthermore, 2 graduands are being bestowed the Ph.D. degree. I believe it is a reflection of the high standards achieved that their theses have been accepted for publication.

One of the cornerstones of the Institute's success is the institutional link it enjoys with many organizations. I wish to refer, in particular, to IMLI's institutional linkage to IMO, which provides us with access to expert support in our teaching. My sincere appreciation goes to the Technical Co-operation Division which, through the Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme, has facilitated such access. Indeed, thanks to its assistance, the Institute receives IMO officials who share with our students their knowledge on the latest IMO developments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As an institution offering specialized training for international maritime law professionals, we are especially proud of our alumni. Since 1989, the Institute has trained over 1000 professionals, mainly government officials in 147 States and territories. I am pleased to record that this year for the first time we have received students from Belarus and Sao Tomé and Príncipe.

Dear Graduands,

I am honoured to welcome you to the IMLI global network of international maritime law specialists, numerous members of which now occupy significant positions in their respective fields and are instrumental in the development and dissemination of international maritime law.

None of these achievements would be possible without the support of our generous donors who believe in IMLI's mission. Our gratitude extends in particular to the International Maritime Organization, the Government of Malta, The Nippon Foundation, the International Seafarers' Trust, and Lloyd's Register Foundation.

At this point, I would also like to express my appreciation for the sterling work of the Institute's academic faculty: Professor Norman Martínez, Professor Malgosia Fitzmaurice, Ms. Elda Belja, Dr. Ángeles Jiménez, Dr. Sanjeet Ruhel, Mr. Murat Sumer and Ms. Ramat Jalloh as well as to the Administrative staff for their unwavering support.

Distinguished guests,

Allow me to reserve my concluding remarks for today's graduands as their accomplishments are very important to us. Over this last academic year they have demonstrated passion, commitment, hard work, tolerance, as well as a great spirit of solidarity and perseverance – values which I hope they will carry with them wherever they go.

Dear Graduands,

This is not the graduation that we all envisioned, and this is not the kind of celebration that we all imagined. You endured and succeeded and for that we salute you.

Please however remember that your participation in the IMLI programmes is an opportunity granted to a few well-chosen professionals. This privilege carries with it a responsibility which I am confident you will bear with great pride. Indeed, through your training, IMLI contributes - in its modest way - to the IMO's and its Member States goals and objectives.

I congratulate all of you, and I wish you all further success in your respective professional careers. Your praiseworthy accomplishments today open up a world of opportunities for you and your countries.

Do savour your success, for you deserve it! And lest you forget, your future achievements will continue to consolidate the Institute's academic reputation. Remember you are now IMLI Ambassadors, dedicated to serving the rule of international maritime law. I wish you well in your endeavours.

By the powers vested in me, under the Statute of the Institute, I hereby confer upon you your degree and invite you now to take the IMLI Oath of Allegiance.

We are proud of you and I am confident that you will continue to make IMLI proud!"

Everyone was exceptionally pleased to see each other, even though only by virtual means. After the conclusion of the Ceremony, the Graduands stayed online for nearly over an hour discussing the academic year and catching up on other news with the Director.

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