



WORLD MARITIME DAY CELEBRATED AT IMLI

The IMO International Maritime Law Institute celebrated World Maritime Day on the 27 September 2007. The ceremony which was presided over by the Hon. Censu Galea (Minister for Competitiveness and Communications, Malta), was also attended by H.E. M. Jean-Marc Rives (French Ambassador to Malta), Mr. Frédéric Hébert (Director, REMPEC) and a delegation of REMPEC's officers.



The Hon. Censu Galea (Minister for Competitiveness and Communications, Malta), Prof. David Attard (Director, IMLI), H.E. M. Jean-Marc Rives (French Ambassador to Malta), Mr. Frédéric Hébert (Director, REMPEC) and the REMPEC delegation with the IMLI class of 2007 - 2008

The Institute's Director opened the ceremony by delivering the Welcoming Address where he highlighted the importance of World Maritime Day. Minister Galea then delivered the Keynote Address as follows:



The Hon. Censu Galea (Minister for Competitiveness and Communications, Malta) addressing the forum at IMLI on the occasion of World Maritime Day 2007

*“Director,
Ambassador Rives,
Director Hebert,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure to be invited by IMLI to address its 19th academic year on occasion of World Maritime Day. This annual event is used to rekindle the world’s awareness on the work of IMO in promoting safety and security in shipping and to help protect the marine environment. This year’s World Maritime Day is dedicated to IMO’s response to current environmental challenges.

The theme was chosen to provide IMO with an opportunity to promote its work in the environmental field and to instil in Governments the interest in pursuing measures to increment acceptance of internationally agreed measures for the protection of the marine environment.

In his message commemorating World Maritime Day 2007, Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos, IMO Secretary General recognized that:

There is today, quite rightly, a growing concern for our environment and a genuine fear that, if we do not change our ways right now, the damage we will inflict on our planet will render it incapable of sustaining for future generations the economy we have grown accustomed to, over the better part of the past two centuries.

There is no doubt that environmental issues have now obtained a much higher focus than ever before. Global concerns like climate change now share the limelight with the growing condemnation of marine environmental disasters. Although statistics demonstrate that, of all modes of transport, shipping is the least environmentally damaging, maritime carriers are constantly seen as potential polluters, and as such face strong pressure to put into practice the highest standards to prevent damage to the environment.

It may be recalled that IMO’s original mandate was mainly concerned with maritime safety. However, the work of the organization soon extended to the protection of the marine environment. Soon after its inception the IMO adopted the 1954 OILPOL Convention. The Convention was a huge step forward in the protection of the environment against pollution from

oil. Nonetheless the international community soon realized that, not only did the regulation for the prevention of pollution from oil needed to be revised, but there were other potential pollution areas which needed regulation. This led to the adoption in 1973 of the MARPOL Convention, which now covers prevention of pollution from ships by oil; by noxious liquid substances carried in bulk; harmful substances carried by sea in packaged form; sewage, garbage; and the prevention of air pollution from ships.

More than 30 years after its adoption, MARPOL albeit amended on several occasions remains the most significant international instrument regulating the prevention of pollution by ships. The success of the MARPOL Convention can be assessed on the basis of official statistics, which show that the average number of oil spills over 700 tonnes has decreased from over 25 in the 1970s to just around 4 in the current decade, and that 99 per cent of all oil transported by sea is delivered safely and without impact on the marine environment.

Notwithstanding MARPOL's success, the IMO has extended its environmental work to tackle many other areas of environmental concern. In this respect, the organization has adopted conventions to regulate the Ballast Water Management, to regulate the use of harmful anti-fouling paint on ships hulls; to provide a framework for the preparedness, response and co-operation in tackling pollution from oil and from hazardous and noxious substances; as well as for the regulation of the right of States to intervene on the high seas to prevent, mitigate or eliminate danger to their coastlines or related interests from pollution following a maritime casualty.

More recently in May of this year, IMO adopted in Nairobi a new Convention on the removal of wrecks that may present either a hazard to navigation or a threat to the marine and coastal environments, or both. IMO's latest Convention is the result of many years of hard work. I expect it to attract interest from member States.

In the light of these comments therefore, it may be reasonable to say that IMO has, over the years, adopted numerous measures to prevent and control pollution caused by ships and to diminish the effects of any damage that may occur. Moreover it must be recalled that IMO (with the exception of the limited powers granted by the STCW Convention) unfortunately does not have any enforcement powers. Thus the implementation of these internationally agreed standards rests with each and every Government.

It is here that – in my view - IMLI plays a fundamental role. Through the training of lawyers from all over the world, IMLI contributes to the progressive implementation of international maritime law. We trust that each of you, upon the return to your countries, will dedicate your professional life to contribute to your country's implementation of internationally agreed standards. Many of your predecessors are now leading delegations to IMO or hold positions of great responsibility in their respective countries. Many legal drafts prepared at IMLI have either been adopted as law, or have formed the basis for discussion for a country's ratification of an IMO Convention. The Government of Malta recognizes IMLI's contribution to the international maritime community and continues to maintain its constant support to the Institute's activities.

I wish to conclude by wishing the course participants – who are lawyers hailing from 24 States – success in your studies and I look forward to meeting you again, particularly at your Graduation Ceremony next May.

Thank you."



Left picture: Mr. Frédéric Hébert (Director, REMPEC), Mrs. Anne-Louise Debeusscher (Counsellor in Cultural Affairs, French Embassy), H.E. M. Jean-Marc Rives (French Ambassador to Malta), The Hon. Censu Galea (Minister for Competitiveness and Communications, Malta) and Prof. David Attard (Director, IMLI) at the IMLI's library during the celebrations;

Right picture: Mr. Albert Bergonzo, Capt. Joseph Zerafa and Mr. Jonathan Pace of REMPEC's Prevention Unit during IMLI's ceremony commemorating World Maritime Day

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