



IMLI'S 21ST ANNUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD AT MALTA MARITIME MUSEUM ON 1 MAY 2010

The IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) held its 21st Annual Graduation Ceremony on 1 May 2010 at the Malta Maritime Museum, in Vittoriosa.

The Ceremony which was presided by H.E. Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos (Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization) was attended by many distinguished guests, including, Dr. Christopher Bezzina (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family), Ambassador Lino Vassallo (Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen and Permanent Representative of Malta to the International Maritime Organisation), Mr. Frederic Hebert (Director of REMPEC), Mr. Marco Portelli (Chairman of Transport Malta), Mr. Kiyoharu Sugiura (Project Coordinator of Maritime Affairs Department of The Nippon Foundation) and diplomatic representatives.

The Graduation Ceremony was opened by IMLI's Director, Professor David Attard, who delivered the welcoming address. In his address he noted that:

“Today's Ceremony marks the end of the 21st academic year and the entry of our graduands (from 24 States) into the fraternity of 499 IMLI LL.M. graduates from 116 States and territories. This year we are particularly pleased to have, for the first time, lawyers hailing from Chile, Dominican Republic, Eritrea and Niue.

This Graduation Ceremony also marks an important landmark in our Institute's history as there are two graduands who will be awarded the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International Maritime Law. ”

Professor Attard recalled that the success that the Institute enjoys is also largely due to the support received from many sectors of the international maritime community. He expressed his

warmest thanks to the International Maritime Organization, to The Nippon Foundation, to the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), to the Lloyd's Register Educational Trust (LRET), to the EU funded SAFEMED project, the scholarships of which have been kindly administered by REMPEC, and to a number of Governments for their generous contributions in providing scholarships; particularly to the Governments of Malta and Switzerland for their unwavering, constant support to the Institute's funding, and to the Comité Maritime International (CMI) who has always been very willing to financially assist the Institute.

Professor Attard concluded his speech by addressing the graduates to whom he wished well in their future endeavours.

Then, the IMO Secretary-General was invited to deliver the graduation address.



*H.E. Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos (IMO Secretary-General),
delivering the graduation address at IMLI's 21st Graduation Ceremony*

In his Graduation Address, H.E. Mr. Mitropoulos noted:

“[...] the increasing number of IMLI graduates, who now form a formidable network of lawyers worldwide, confirms the Institute's success in the pursuit of its objectives and its effective capacity-building role within the maritime community and the shipping industry at large. Each

graduating class adds its knowledge and expertise to an already impressive body of alumni and provides significant benefits to the global maritime community.”

Furthermore, H.E. Mr. Mitropoulos pointed out:

“It should never be forgotten that effective development and management of national maritime law is not just a paper exercise, it is actually vital in helping to ensure that sub-standard elements of the industry have nowhere to hide and that quality shipping prospers – and this depends, in large measure, on the knowledge and professional skills of lawyers such as all of you graduating today from IMLI.”

H.E. Mr. Mitropoulos congratulated the graduates of the Class of 2010 by saying:

“May I, therefore, congratulate the class of 2010 on the successful completion of their studies here and wish them every success in their future endeavours. This year, as IMLI celebrates 21 years in full-scale operation, it does so by sending out, as ever, another class of graduates ready to join illustrious predecessors, who have moved on from this seat of learning to occupy positions of responsibility and seniority throughout the world of maritime law.”

Hereunder follows the graduation address delivered by H.E. Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos, IMO Secretary-General.

IMO International Maritime Law Institute

2010 graduation ceremony

Malta, 1 May 2010

President Emeritus, Excellencies, Permanent Representative of Malta to IMO, IMLI Director, REMPEC Director, Professors, Parents, Graduands, Distinguished guests, Media representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is, once again, a pleasure and a privilege to be here on what I know is a very special day for all concerned – in particular for the students who, today, mark their graduation from this fine institution, fully equipped to take their place in the outside world and embark on whatever challenging, yet rewarding, career path they have chosen.

IMLI was established by IMO in 1988 to ensure that sufficient maritime law experts, armed with the appropriate knowledge and skills, would be available – especially within developing

countries – to help with the preparation, implementation and enforcement of legislation giving effect to the international instruments to which Governments had become Parties, through IMO.

Since then, the contribution made by IMLI's graduates in taking on this task cannot be over-emphasized. IMO has developed a detailed and comprehensive framework of international standards that have rendered both shipping, and the wider international community, great service by enhancing the safety, security and efficiency of this vital industry and by progressively reducing the impact of shipping on the marine and atmospheric environment.

But, while IMO's efforts are concentrated, in the main, on developing the international regulatory framework, that is only one side of the equation. The other is the highly specialized task of drafting practicable and enforceable national laws, without which IMO's internationally agreed standards simply could not be put into effect nor enforced.

When a Government becomes Party to an IMO convention, it takes on an obligation to comply with its provisions, and this generally entails incorporating them into its own national legal system. And that is a job that requires trained, expert staff.

As many of you will know, it was my pre-predecessor as Secretary-General of IMO, Dr. C.P. Srivastava of India, who, together with Dr. Joseph Fenech of Malta, advocated strongly for human resource development as a fundamental pillar for a better global legal order; shared a vision of bridging the gap between developed and developing countries; and, accordingly, spearheaded the establishment of IMLI as a centre of excellence to train lawyers from developing countries in private and public international maritime law. It is thanks to their foresight, determination and tireless efforts that the Institute was launched in 1988 and started its first course in 1989 – both of these being 20th anniversary milestones that we have celebrated at IMO Headquarters with great pride in the achievements that, under the dedicated management of its Directors, including Professor Attard, the Institute has registered to date.

Indeed, the increasing number of IMLI graduates, who now form a formidable network of lawyers worldwide, confirms the Institute's success in the pursuit of its objectives and its effective capacity-building role within the maritime community and the shipping industry at large. Each graduating class adds its knowledge and expertise to an already impressive body of alumni and provides significant benefits to the global maritime community.

It should be a source of great satisfaction that, this year, no fewer than 35 students from 24 different countries participated in the LL.M. programme at IMLI; and it is wonderful to see how the influence of IMLI is spreading, with countries and territories such as Chile, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea and Niue (New Zealand) being represented among the student body for the first time. Altogether, some 517 students from 115 States have now benefitted from training at IMLI over the years – an amazing track record of which the institution, and all concerned with it, can be very proud indeed.

As we have heard from Professor Attard, outside of the Academic Programme, 2009 was a busy and eventful year for IMLI with, among other things, a visit from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which we commemorated yesterday with the unveiling of a plaque, and the establishment of a new publishing imprint to support the Ph.D. programme, not to mention the publication of a major volume of essays to mark the 20th anniversary of Professor Attard's own academic career.

Moreover, the Institute was formally acknowledged in the United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/71, adopted on 4 December 2009, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea". The resolution, and I quote, "recognizes the importance of the work of the International Maritime Law Institute of the International Maritime Organization as a centre of education and training of Government legal advisers, mainly from developing States, notes that the number of its graduates in 115 States confirms its effective capacity-building role in the field of international law, congratulates the Institute on the celebration of its twentieth anniversary, and urges States, intergovernmental organizations and financial institutions to make voluntary financial contributions to the budget of the Institute".

High praise indeed – so, well done, IMLI! Of course, it comes as no surprise to learn that the Institute is not resting on its laurels; far from it. It is typical of the progressive thinking that pervades this institution that two new teaching positions are being established, under the "Human Resources Development Project for the Advancement of a More Effective Global Order of the Oceans". IMLI, with the financial support of the Nippon Foundation, will appoint internationally recognized academics to hold the Nippon Foundation Chair on Environmental Law and the Nippon Foundation Lectureship on International Maritime Security Law for the academic year 2010/2011. These teaching positions will initially be established for a period of two years, and are testimony both to the forward-thinking nature of IMLI's management and the continuing generosity of its sponsors and supporters.

In this context, let me take this opportunity to thank all those who have assisted IMLI this year, whether through direct financial support or through in-kind donations. I have already mentioned the Nippon Foundation, whose contribution to IMLI has been, and remains, outstanding; the list is too long for every entity to be mentioned by name, but I would also like to single out the SAFEMED project funded by the European Union, the Lloyd's Register Educational Trust, the Indian Ocean Commission and the Government of Switzerland, in particular, for their major contributions for the academic year just past.

A heartfelt tribute goes equally to the members of the Institute's Governing Board, for their sound advice on, and commitment to, IMLI's continuing development; and to all the administrative and academic (both resident and visiting) staff, whose unquestioning dedication and professionalism ensures a successful outcome to the students' learning and research, year after year.

And, of course, special praise must be reserved for the Government of Malta, whose generous and continuous hosting of the Institute makes all this possible.

Finally, let me address a few words specifically to those we are here to honour today – the graduating class of 2010.

It should never be forgotten that effective development and management of national maritime law is not just a paper exercise, it is actually vital in helping to ensure that sub-standard elements of the industry have nowhere to hide and that quality shipping prospers – and this depends, in large measure, on the knowledge and professional skills of lawyers such as all of you graduating today from IMLI.

May I, therefore, congratulate the class of 2010 on the successful completion of their studies here and wish them every success in their future endeavours. This year, as IMLI celebrates 21 years in full-scale operation, it does so by sending out, as ever, another class of graduates ready to join illustrious predecessors, who have moved on from this seat of learning to occupy positions of responsibility and seniority throughout the world of maritime law.

Today marks a very special occasion from which you, dear graduands, and all those who have played a part in helping you to finish your studies, fully deserve to derive great professional and personal satisfaction. It marks not simply the conclusion of your academic studies but also the beginning of a new stage in your challenging and rewarding careers – careers which will, I am sure, be of benefit not just to yourselves and your families but also to your countries and to the international shipping community as a whole.

Your achievements, once again, demonstrate the continued, highly effective nature of the training provided by IMLI, and also serve as a reminder of the enormous positive impact that this Institute exerts on the maritime industry at large, through its alumni worldwide.

I wish you all the best as you return to your respective home countries to apply the specialized knowledge you have acquired here in Malta – knowledge, which, I am sure, will help IMO to achieve its desired goals of safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean seas.

Good luck to you all.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

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