



IMO SECRETARY-GENERAL DELIVERS THE GRADUATION ADDRESS

During IMLI's 22nd Graduation Ceremony the IMO Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos delivered the graduation address as follows:

“Honourable Speaker, Excellencies, Mr. President Emeritus, Members of Parliament, Honourable Justices, Attorney General, Permanent Representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Cook Islands, Ecuador and Malta to IMO, Chairman of the Maritime Authority of Malta, CMI Representative and Representative of the Nippon Foundation, IMLI Governing Board Members and Board Director, REMPEC Director, Professors, Parents, Graduands, Distinguished guests, IMLI staff, Media Representatives, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is, once again, my great pleasure and privilege to join you at this very special ceremony, one which I know means a great deal to everybody here, not least to the students who are graduating today from this fine Institute.



H.E. Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos (IMO Secretary-General) delivering the graduation address during IMLI's 22nd Graduation Ceremony

For you, the graduation class, today marks the culmination of a period of study, hard work and, I trust, some enjoyment, on this beautiful island of Malta; but it also marks the beginning of a brand-new era in your lives, one in which you now are equipped with professional tools of a high standard to make a genuine difference in the service of your chosen career path of international maritime law.

The world today is troubled, turbulent and divided to a worrying extent. But civilized people everywhere are united by the need to have confidence in robust legal systems that set adequate and up-to-date standards for them to go about their peaceful and legitimate business, at the same time providing protection from those who would seek to act outside the law.

This principle applies just as strongly in the industrial milieu, where a properly developed and effectively enforced legal framework can establish universal technical standards and provide a level playing field on which law-abiding operators can compete fairly.

For the shipping world, this legal framework is provided principally by the International Maritime Organization, the Member Governments of which collectively develop and adopt standards concerning the safety, security, efficiency of navigation and environmental performance of international shipping – standards that should apply to all ships, regardless of

which flag they fly. It is this that underpins a diverse and eclectic international industry and provides the solid foundation it needs to operate smoothly, efficiently and effectively.

But such an international framework can only bear fruit if it is comprehensively implemented at the national level. Properly trained maritime lawyers, such as those of you graduating today, play a vital role in ensuring that internationally agreed measures are fully and accurately enshrined in national law.

IMLI was created principally to ensure that appropriate maritime legal expertise would be available in the developing world – its success has, however, attracted students from developed countries as well and now it operates as a fully-fledged international education and training centre of excellence. Its graduates have a long history in the establishment of appropriate legal infrastructures at national level, encompassing not only up-to-date legislative regimes but also suitable machinery for the review, revision and modification of legislation to keep such regimes in line with changes in international maritime law and the latest developments in marine technology and shipping practices.

As Professor Attard said, this year, 31 students from 23 countries are graduating from the LL.M. programme, one from the Advanced Diploma programme and one has successfully completed a Ph.D.

With the students graduating today, the total number of IMLI alumni, from all programmes and courses, rises to an impressive 591; and this year, there are students from three countries new to the Institute, namely Antigua and Barbuda, the Cook Islands and Mongolia, adding to an already astonishing 120 States and land territories that have benefited from sending students here – a number that compares well with the 169 members of IMO and the 192 members of the United Nations.

Students apart, I am particularly delighted that Mr. Patrick Griggs, who, as a member of the Institute's Governing Board over many years, has made a valuable contribution to IMLI, will be honoured with the Degree of Doctor of International Maritime Law *Honoris Causa*.

For many years now, IMLI's graduates have formed a formidable and trusted body of lawyers, who collectively maintain, and uphold, the highest standards in their chosen profession. Many are now doing sterling work in their home countries; some scale the heights and, of those recently elevated to high posts, I would mention, in particular, Mr. Kofi Mbiah, an IMLI graduate from Ghana, who last year was elected Chairman of the IMO Legal Committee and Mr. Yakoba Italeli, a graduate from Tuvalu, who has attained the ultimate accolade of being elected as his country's Head of State. So, who knows, perhaps we have another future world leader among today's graduates? Amen!

And it is not only the students of IMLI, who earn plaudits and accolades. As you heard from the Director, last December, the United Nations General Assembly, in a resolution entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, acknowledged, for the third consecutive year, IMLI’s contribution to the international community recognizing it as a fine centre of education and training of Government legal advisers and confirming its effective capacity-building role in the field of international law.

I think this is something of which we can all be proud (especially the Institute’s indefatigable Director, Professor Attard and staff – both academic and administrative) and for which I offer my sincere congratulations.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of the many donors who support IMLI, whether financially or in kind. In this context, allow me to thank, in particular, the Nippon Foundation, the Lloyd’s Register Educational Trust, the EU-Funded SAFEMED Project (implemented by REMPEC), the Indian Ocean Commission, the Swiss Government and, of course, the Government of Malta, for their continued kindness and generosity. I note that the Nippon Foundation has established two teaching posts at IMLI (a Lecturer in International Maritime Security Law and a Professor in Marine Environmental Law). Of these, the Lecturer joined the Institute last November and, as I am advised, is already making a significant contribution to the faculty.

My congratulations, and those of the whole of IMO, go to all those involved in making IMLI such a success, from the Director to the lowest ranking staff member – and, above all, to the graduands, who, through hard work, diligence, discipline and commitment, are about to become ambassadors for their countries and for the Institute itself.

Among those, who deserve a high praise for their contribution to the progress the Institute is continually making, I wish to also mention the Members of the Governing Board, who assist me and the Director in making the right decisions to the benefit of the common cause that brings us together.

I have no doubt that the graduation class of 2011 will join their distinguished predecessors in making a valuable contribution towards developing a global culture of maritime safety and a heightened awareness of environmental issues throughout the maritime community. The omens are good for them to live up to our expectations.

And I urge you all, dear graduands, never to forget that your work in the legal field really does matter; it really can help preserve the marine environment; it really can help save lives; and it really can serve the great industry, shipping, on which we all so much depend. And that, I think,

is something you can be very proud of. I wish you all good luck; may life be kind to you and the winds be fair!

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you.”

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