

IMLI DIRECTOR DELIVERS THE WELCOMING ADDRESS

Professor David Attard (Director of IMLI) delivered the following welcoming address during IMLI's 23rd Graduation Ceremony.

“Secretary-General
Chairman of the IMLI Board of Governors
Honourable Speaker
Honourable Minister
Excellencies
IMLI Governors
Rector Manificus
President of the CMI
Warden of Rhodes House, Oxford
Graduands,
Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you to IMLI's 23rd Graduation Ceremony, which celebrates the academic success of our graduands.

I am honoured, this morning, to welcome Mr. Koji Sekimizu, the new Secretary-General of the IMO, who despite his many commitments has agreed to be with us at this important moment of our academic year.

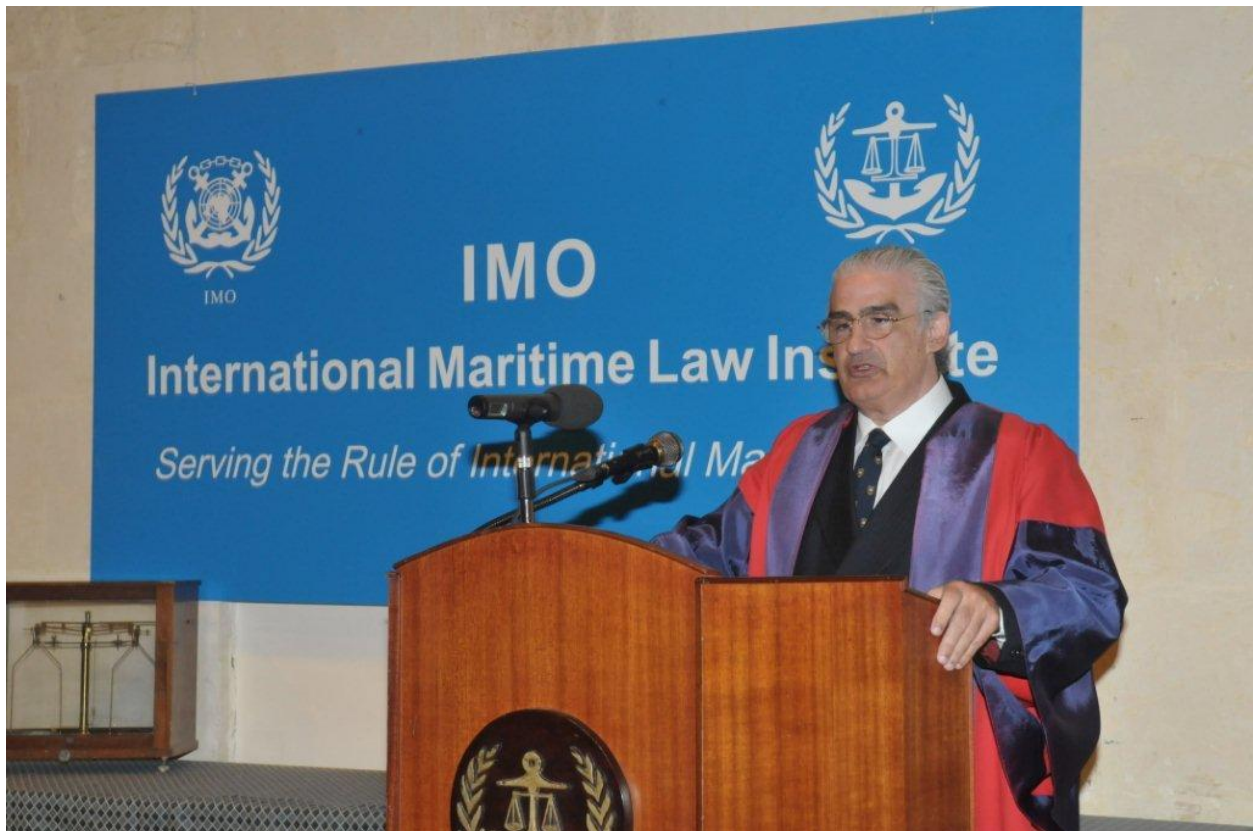
I am also privileged to welcome again Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos, who presides over today's Graduation Ceremony in his capacity as the Chairman of the IMLI Governing Board.

We are particularly pleased that the Honourable Speaker, Dr Michael Frenco, who as Minister of Transport supported IMLI, and the recently appointed Minister of Justice, Dr. Chris Said, who has already shown great commitment to IMLI are with us this morning. I am pleased to record

that both personalities made official visits to meet our students during the academic year. Their presence here is a reflection of the long-standing support which the Institute receives from the Government and people of Malta.

I wish to recognize the presence of other distinguished personalities, Professor Dr. Marko Pavliha (IMLI Governor), Ambassador Lino Vassallo (IMLI Governor), Mr. Karl Gombrii (President of the Comité Maritime International), Professor Francis Reynolds (Professor Emeritus of University of Oxford), Dr. Donald Markwell (Warden, Rhodes House, Oxford), and Ms. Yukiko Kuwata from The Nippon Foundation.

I also wish to welcome friends and family of the graduands who have travelled from all over the world to attend this momentous event.



Professor David Attard (Director of IMLI) delivering the Welcoming Address during IMLI's 23rd Graduation Ceremony

Distinguished Guests,

This Ceremony marks the end of the 23rd academic year of the Institute. Today 37 lawyers from 28 States will be graduating from the Institute's LL.M. programme and two students will be graduating from the Advanced Diploma programme. These graduates will be joining the

global network of a total of 594 lawyers from 123 States and territories who have successfully undertaken studies in the Institute's programmes and courses. This year we are particularly pleased to have, for the first time, lawyers hailing from Bolivia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Kingdom, graduating from the Institute's LL.M. programme.

Distinguished Guests,

It gives me great satisfaction to look at our graduands, newly-crowned with academic success, and to congratulate them for having succeeded despite the magnitude of their task.

For the past months they have undertaken an exceptionally intensive and comprehensive programme covering the full spectrum of international maritime law. Their task should not be underestimated. The subject matter covered is vast. Our academic standards are very demanding, as confirmed by the external examiners. It is therefore a great pleasure to be able, on this important day, to honour their academic success.

The cornerstone of any academic institution is its reputation. At IMLI we are conscious of the need to ensure that our training and teaching conform to the highest standards which need to be maintained if we are to preserve our reputation as a centre of excellence. I must emphasize that the Institute's academic success is the result of various practices that have been put in place, such as the appointment of independent external examiners, and our cooperation with leading academics from such institutions as: Tulane University, Bonn University, University of Oxford, University of London, the University of Ljubljana, and the University of Rome.

Whilst the resident faculty is responsible for the teaching of the programme, visiting fellows are invited to lecture on the latest developments in the field of their expertise. In this academic year we had the privilege and pleasure of welcoming around 40 distinguished academics and eminent practitioners from all over the world.

It is also a matter of great pride to announce that the United Nations General Assembly for four consecutive years has recognized the importance of our Institute's work. The latest Resolution (A/Res/66/231) adopted on 14 December 2011 entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea" states *inter alia*, that the General Assembly:

"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, confirms its effective capacity-building role in the field of international law, and urges States, intergovernmental organizations and financial institutions to make voluntary financial contributions to the budget of the Institute."

The importance of IMLI's contribution to the study and knowledge of international maritime law will be reflected in the Institute's forthcoming publication entitled "IMLI Manual on International Maritime Law". This three-volume work, to be published by Oxford University Press, will adopt for the first time an all-encompassing approach to the subject of international maritime law.

The Manual will be written and edited by a group of academics and practitioners who are leading experts in their respective areas. Their eminence and expertise will guarantee that the work will be of an exceptionally high quality, well written and well researched.

It is also with great pleasure that I announce the forthcoming publication of the second volume of the Series "IMLI Studies in International Maritime Law" published by Routledge. The book written by Dr. Mitja Grbec is entitled "Extension of Coastal State Jurisdiction in Enclosed or Semi-enclosed Seas: An Adriatic Perspective".

The Institute's success is also the result of the institutional links between IMLI and many organizations. I wish to refer to the Institute's institutional linkage with IMO which provides us with access to the most competent expertise in shipping available throughout the world. With IMO's assistance, IMLI continuously seeks to fine-tune its syllabus to reflect the latest developments in international maritime law.

We are particularly privileged to have with us for the first time the new IMO Secretary-General. We are grateful for the great interest he has shown in the Institute's work from the very first days of his appointment.

It is with great satisfaction to read the Secretary-General's view that:

[...]IMLI has epitomized achievement and accomplishment for many years, the importance of which has been recognized by the UN General Assembly. I have every confidence that the Institute will continue to provide the high-quality, specialist legal training that has become its trademark.

I am also pleased to state that the Secretary-General has indicated that he expects IMLI to participate fully in his efforts to encourage States to develop national maritime policies. In this respect the possibility of establishing a model programme, in the Western Indian Ocean, is already being considered. We look forward to contributing, with the participation of the 107 IMLI graduates in the region, to this important initiative which will provide States with both challenges and great opportunities.

We are grateful to Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos, who, throughout his tenure as IMO Secretary-General showed a great interest in the Institute's work. Mr. Mitropoulos has been a prime supporter of the Institute. For years, in his capacity as the Chairman of the IMLI Governing Board, he has dedicated his time and efforts towards the Institute's welfare.

The Institute is also proud of its association with the Comité Maritime International. The CMI, which was formally established in 1897, is the oldest international organization dedicated to the unification of maritime law. It was created with the object of contributing by all appropriate means and activities to the harmonization and unification of maritime law in all its aspects. For this contribution, the Institute's Academic Committee agreed to confer today on the CMI 'The IMLI Award for Meritorious Contribution towards the Progressive Development and Codification of International Maritime Law'.

Distinguished Guests,

Besides these institutional links the success that the Institute enjoys is also largely due to the financial support received from many sectors of the international maritime community.

I am particularly grateful to IMO, to The Nippon Foundation, to the Lloyd's Register Educational Trust (LRET), and to a number of Governments for their generous contributions in providing scholarships. The Governments of Malta and Switzerland deserve special tribute for their unwavering, constant support to the Institute's funding, as does the CMI. Special thanks should also go to the EU funded SAFEMED Project, the scholarships of which have been kindly administered by REMPEC.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the sterling work of the Institute's academic faculty: Professor Malgosia Fitzmaurice, Dr. Norman Martinez, Mr. Ruben Maceda, Ms. Elda Belja and Mr. Riyaz Hamza, as well as to the Administrative staff for their unwavering support.

Dear Graduands,

Please remember that your participation in the IMLI programme is an opportunity granted to a few well-chosen lawyers. This privilege carries with it a responsibility which I am confident you will bear with great pride. You have now been endowed with the knowledge and skills required to assist your Governments in adopting and implementing international maritime rules, measures and standards. Indeed, through your training, IMLI contributes - in its small way - to the IMO process of encouraging and facilitating the global adoption and implementation of legal instruments designed to promote safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans.

In concluding I wish to augur further success to our graduands in their respective professional careers. Graduands, your praiseworthy accomplishments today open up a world of opportunities for you and the countries you come from. 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 the Institute Ambassadors, dedicated to serving the rule of international maritime law. I wish you well in your endeavours. We are proud of you!"

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