



GRADUATION ADDRESS OF THE IMO SECRETARY-GENERAL AT THE 18TH IMLI GRADUATION CEREMONY

IMLI held its 18th Graduation Ceremony on Saturday, May 5, 2007. IMO Secretary-General, Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos, delivered the Graduation Address.

The text of his speech is quoted in full.



*IMO Secretary-General, Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos
delivering the Graduation Address at the 18th IMLI Graduation Ceremony*

**IMO International Maritime Law Institute
2007 Graduation Ceremony
Malta, 5 May 2007**

**Address by Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos
Secretary-General, International Maritime Organization**

Honourable Minister and Under-Secretary for Maritime Affairs, Excellencies, Honourable Justices, Head of the Malta Armed Forces, Professors, Parents, Graduands, Distinguished guests, Media representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to begin by expressing my delight for, once again, being with you today. To be able to participate in the celebrations of this very special day for all of you and, in particular for the body of students that is graduating today from this highly specialized centre of excellence, is both a pleasure and a privilege.

For me, every IMLI graduation class represents a renewal and a re-invigoration of IMO's potential to achieve its objectives. For you, the graduands, will now be joining a growing band of alumni equipped with the skills and qualifications required to ensure that IMO measures can and will be translated into effective legislation at the national level. As such, you now have the ability to form an integral part of the chain of implementation of global maritime standards, the development of which is at the very heart of the Organization's objectives.

As you know, since its establishment, nearly 60 years ago, IMO has, as its main objective, the adoption of a comprehensive framework of international legislation relating to all technical aspects of commercial shipping. During that time, the Organization's mandate has grown from its early focus, purely on maritime safety, to embrace the efficiency and security of shipping as well as the prevention of marine pollution. All of that is still, and always will be, an important part of our work. But the adoption of regulations is only the start of the process. Today, more attention than ever is being paid to the crucial issue of **implementation** – and that means making sure that IMO legislation is put into proper effect, uniformly throughout the world.

The primary responsibility for doing so rests with individual Governments. By accepting an IMO Convention, a Government thereby agrees to enforce it just like any other international instrument it decides to become party to. And to do this, it will generally need to incorporate the instrument into its own national legal system. For this, Governments require trained, expert staff.

IMLI was created to assist in providing a ready source of just such experts, and its success in achieving this objective is now internationally recognized. The Institute has, in fact, more than fulfilled its early promise. It is now an indispensable part of IMO's strategy and the 35 young men and women graduating today, with Master of Law degrees in International Maritime Law, bring the total trained by the Institute to 396 from some 110 different States and territories from around the globe. This represents a major contribution to the goals of IMO: IMLI has helped to create a team of experts who are capable of ensuring that IMO standards are properly enforced and, for this, **the Institute deserves not just my thanks but those of the entire shipping community** and, indeed, the **wider global community** that, in order to survive and the world economy not to collapse, it depends, day in-day out, on a safe, secure, efficient and clean shipping industry – even if they are not always aware of it.

A very special tribute is, of course, due to the **Government of Malta**, without whose generous hostship facilities none of this would be possible. As one of the world's major shipping registers and an IMO Council Member, Malta's contribution to the overall work of IMO is recognized worldwide. And, of course, when considering Malta's contribution to the development of international maritime law, nobody can deny that few countries can compete with her – which makes Malta a most fitting place to host this highly valued institution.

Also richly deserving of all our thanks are the many **donors** without whose enduring support IMLI's success over the years would simply not have been possible. In this context, I should like to make particular mention of the Nippon Foundation for its ongoing assistance to, and interest in, the Institute. I look forward to a continuation of this vital source of aid and am confident that the consistently high quality of IMLI graduates will encourage more development partners and recipient countries to contribute to the excellent training that is being offered here in Malta.

My sincere appreciation goes, equally, to IMLI's many **visiting lecturers**, all of whom give their time and services voluntarily and generously. The Institute could not function without them and I know that their contribution, in imparting invaluable knowledge and expertise to present and future generations, is greatly appreciated by both students and within the shipping industry as a whole. And, while on the subject of vital contributions to IMLI, let me reserve a special mention for the Institute's **dedicated teaching and administrative staff**, ably led by its Director, Professor David Attard, who remain the driving force behind so much of IMLI's success. Professor Attard's and his associates' motivation and enthusiasm for the Institute are an example to us all. Their commitment and dedication, together with that of all the members of the Institute's **Governing Board**, deserve our highest appreciation.

And, of course, last but not least, I congratulate and thank **you**, the **graduands**, warmly and wholeheartedly, on this prestigious occasion when you are, rightly, feeling a sense of pride and satisfaction at having successfully achieved, after considerable effort and dedication, the high standards required for graduation. Well done, indeed!

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Ladies and gentlemen, before I conclude, I should like to say just a few words about the theme for this year's World Maritime Day, which, as unanimously approved by the Council last November, is "**IMO's response to current environmental challenges**". This will give us the opportunity – at a time when society considers it imperative to find sustainable and lasting solutions to redress the negative impact of human activity on the environment – to increase awareness about the threat to it stemming from shipping operations and, by taking appropriate preventive and, where necessary, remedial action, to show that the maritime sector does care about the environment and is, indeed, already at the forefront of that challenge.

Again here, I am full of praise for Malta's offer to house and generously support **REMPEC**, the IMO regional centre for combating marine pollution in the Mediterranean, which I am going to visit in a short while at its new Headquarters provided by the host country at premises which, until very recently, were occupied by the Malta Maritime Authority.

There may not be too many topics today that truly bridge the generations but the **protection of the environment** is certainly one of them. The issues that confront us concern the very future of our planet and the decisions mankind makes over the coming years will certainly shape the inheritance that my generation will leave to yours – and, without a doubt, the legacy you, the graduands, may leave to **your** grandchildren.

My generation, as a whole, has only very recently come to understand that the planet that sustains us and gives us life is a fragile entity and that our actions can, and do, have massive repercussions. It is not proving an easy lesson for us to learn, but we are gradually succeeding. Your generation, on the other hand, is growing up with this knowledge. A caring and responsible attitude towards the

environment in which you were born, nurtured and are growing will be as natural and as innate to you as your ability to communicate in your native language.

The protection of the environment is something that can be, and must be, addressed at every level. It is, however, imperative for all of us to understand that the work of Organizations such as IMO, at the global regulatory level, is only really effective if the measures we adopt are properly implemented, on a daily basis, by ordinary people in the industries that we serve. Everybody, no matter who they are, can, and must, do their bit to make a difference. As graduates of IMLI, you, more than most of your contemporaries, have the tools to make a positive contribution in this respect. I wish you the motivation and the strength to do so, confident in the knowledge that your time here in Malta will have helped prepare you to play your part.

IMLI graduates now have a proven track record, over many years, of directly or indirectly helping IMO to achieve its aims of improving shipping safety and preventing marine pollution by ships; and it is my fervent hope that those who graduate today add their valuable contribution to the relentless efforts of all those who care about shipping and the oceans.

I would like to close my address by wishing this year's graduands all the very best as they embark on their challenging careers and I look forward to working with them in the future. And to their parents, I extend my warm congratulations on their sons' and daughters' achievements.

I hope you will all enjoy what is a very special day for the students, their parents and teachers, the Institute, Malta, the maritime community and IMO.

Thank you.

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