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The IMO International Maritime Law Institute Official Electronic Newsletter (Vol. 4, Issue No. 53) 15 May 2007

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE CLASS OF 2006-2007

Ms. Juta Kaktiniece, IMLI graduate from Latvia, delivered the Valedictory Address during the 18th Graduation Ceremony held on May 5, 2007.

The full text of her speech is quoted below.



Ms. Juta Kaktiniece (Latvia) delivering the Valedictory Address on behalf of the Class of 2006-2007 during the 18th IMLI Graduation Ceremony

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS 2007 MS. JUTA KAKTINIECE (LATVIA)

Your Excellencies
Distinguished Guests,

Fellow Graduands,

The sea means something different to everyone:

a judge may see it as a source of claims;

a master of a ship will see traffic separation schemes;

a navy officer – safety and security requirements;

a private lawyer – work;

a public servant – protection of the marine environment;

our friends and families – a reason for missing us this year.

So, through which eyes do I need to look at the sea today standing here on behalf of all our class?

I believe there is one point common for all of us. I stand before you today to represent a diverse group of lawyers from varying backgrounds brought together by one common factor – the love for the sea and anything maritime.

In our first class almost 9 months ago we were told an anecdote. The Anecdote stated that many years ago:

A certain shopkeeper sent his son to learn about the secret of happiness from the wisest man in the world (in our case the anecdote was intended to bring forward the secret to success in our studies). The lad wandered through the desert for many days until he reached the castle where the wise man lived. The wise man listened attentively to the boy's explanation of why he had come, but told him that he didn't have time just then to explain the secret of happiness. He suggested that the boy look around the palace and return in two hours.

"Meanwhile, I want to ask you to do something", said the wise man, handing the boy a teaspoon that held two drops of oil. "As you wander around, carry this spoon with you without allowing the oil to spill."

The boy began climbing and descending the many stairways of the palace, keeping his eyes fixed on the spoon. After two hours, he returned to the room where the wise man was.

"Well," asked the wise man, "did you see the Persian tapestries that are hanging in my dining hall? Did you notice the beautiful parchments in my library?"

"The boy was embarrassed, and confessed that he had observed nothing. His only concern had been not to spill the oil that the wise man had entrusted to him.

"Then go and observe the marvels of my world, and come back in another hour, said the wise man, and saying this he gave the boy another two drops of oil"

"Relieved, the boy picked up the spoon and returned to his exploration of the palace, this time observing all of the works of art on the ceilings and the walls. Upon returning to the wise man, he related in detail everything he had seen.

“But where are the drops of oil I entrusted to you?” asked the wise man.

“Looking down at the spoon he held, the boy saw that the oil was gone.

“Well, there is only one piece of advice I can give you,” said the wisest of wise men.

“The secret of happiness (or in our case the secret to success) is to see all the marvels of the world, and never to forget the drops of oil on the spoon”.

During this academic year we have learnt how man has always desired for adventure and has always looked to the sea as a means to satisfy that desire. He has come to the sea for his sustenance, for his recreation, and for his economic well-being. But man by himself, unregulated and in the wake of competition, has a tendency to abuse the resources that have been made available to him. A means to balance the diversity in interest must always be sought.

Considering, however, that each person looks at the sea differently, an intermediary thus becomes necessary to balance and protect the interests of each one.

The International Maritime Organization plays that crucial role of intermediary and mediator to balance the varying interests affecting the ecology, the environment, society, the law, economics, safety and security – to ensure the continued viability of the sea for its different users. In fulfilling its role, the IMO seeks to ensure that the resources of the sea are available and accessible to the nationals of all States belonging to this present generation and are preserved for future generations. The IMO has created, and continues to create, the framework to ensure safe and secure shipping on clean seas.

The accident involving the Titanic which triggered the creation of the first SOLAS, and the accidents involving the Torrey Canyon, the Amoco Cadiz, the Achille Lauro, the Herald of Free Enterprise, the Estonia, the Erika, the Prestige and the al-Salam Boccaccio 98, are witnesses to the lacuna in the regulatory framework and have served as building blocks for the improvement of that framework.

But the creation and the improvement of the framework represent only half of the work. IMO, if it is to succeed in its quest to ensure safe and secure shipping on clean seas, must make sure that the framework is implemented and enforced. The chain, which IMO has created and continues to create, can only be as strong as its weakest link.

IMLI, was, thus, established in 1988 to train lawyers from all over the world in the field of the international maritime law. It is indeed the only Institute in the world where you can truly study maritime law from a comparative perspective. Its success is reflected in the achievements of its graduates, the ranks of which we are proudly joining today.

We come from many countries carrying with us local expertise in the diverse fields of maritime law. Each one of us brought his or her experience – in ship finance, maritime

safety, port regulations, maritime security and law enforcement, commercial trade, environmental protection, and international relations – each hoping to enhance the knowledge he or she possessed. But we got more than we had hoped for. Instead of merely enhancing the expertise we had gained by working within our own national regimes, our eyes were opened to the entire spectrum of maritime law on the international plane. The knowledge imparted to us during this academic year has made us realize that possessing expertise was not enough, there is a need to harmonize the national regime with international rules if we are to successfully participate in global trade and ensure the protection of the marine environment.

Therefore:

Considering that we each came to this island with a dream – to obtain specialist training in maritime law;

Considering that during these past months we have had the opportunity to explore Malta and confirm that it is indeed a beautiful jewel in the Mediterranean;

Considering that during these past months we have got to know so many friendly, good willing, tolerant and helpful Maltese people;

but more importantly considering that we are now taking with us more than just technical knowledge and expertise,

we believe that we have observed the principle behind the anecdote told to us in our first class in IMLI. We have achieved our dream and the many good memories of a year spent in Malta will be forever in our hearts.

This would not have been possible without the generosity of our respective Governments, and our sponsors, particularly the IMO, the Nippon Foundation, the EU funded SAFEMED project, Lloyd's Register of Shipping, the Government of Malta, as well as several other organizations, institutions and individuals, who have assisted us throughout our stay at the Institute. We also wish to acknowledge the support we have received from our families and friends who are with us today either in body or spirit and who share with us the joy of this moment. We extend our thanks to the IMLI staff who has provided us with the needed administrative and technical support, our visiting lecturers who have crossed the seas to share with us the expertise they possess in their chosen area of maritime law.

However, the greatest gratitude we owe to:

- Ms. Josephine Uranza – who always was so patient and understanding with us;
- Dr. Ivan Vella – whose classes were CRYSTAL CLEAR;
- Mr. Norman Martinez – whose classes were just FANTASTIC;
- and of course Professor David Attard – I could not find the right words to express our respect and thankfulness to our beloved Professor, but the opportunity to attend his classes was clearly a great honour and privilege for us.

We do not have enough words to express all our gratitude today, but I believe that the best way to say thank you is to work hard and put in practice everything you taught us.

Thanks to IMLI, we masters, judges, public servants, private lawyers, navy officers, diplomats - now know that there are so many different ways to look at the sea and now we belong to the ones who understand that:

sometimes even the sea is silent, quiet,
Not even a droplet breaks on the sand.
So endlessly the sea waits for something
That she dare not murmur.

And then we say to her:

"Oh, sea, dear sea,
unhappy child,
Oh, little girl, this age is very hard for you!
Let us fluff up your silky dune pillow
And place it underneath your tired head.
Rest for a little while.

We know—they often pile burdens
On you and never ask if you can bear them.
And they call you a strong woman.—
How sadly shine in your dark waves white strands!
So young and yet so gray...
So young and yet so tired..."

And she hides herself inside our hands,
And amber drops flow and flow.

"Well, weep out your grief... it will be better."

/Vizma Belševica. Latvia/

And with the training we have received here at IMLI, we hope that we can be the ones to make it better. All of us now, despite our different backgrounds, speak the same language of international maritime law. We are, as from now, proud ambassadors of IMLI and will dedicate our careers to serve the rule of international maritime law.

The success we achieve in our future careers will mirror the gratefulness we feel in our hearts.

Thank you.

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