

IMLI DIRECTOR DELIVERS THE WELCOME ADDRESS AT THE 32ND GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE INSTITUTE

Professor David Attard (Director, IMLI) delivered the Welcome Address to the distinguished attendees and graduands at the Institute's 32nd Annual Graduation Ceremony held on Friday 3 September 2021.



Professor David Joseph Attard (Director, IMLI) delivering the Welcome Address

In his Address, Professor Attard thanked His Excellency Mr. Kitack Lim (Secretary-General of the IMO), who despite his heavy commitments, graciously agreed to deliver the Graduation Address and expressed deep appreciation and gratitude to him for the generous interest he has taken in the work and welfare of the Institute. Professor Attard noted his pleasure at the presence of distinguished personalities and avid supporters of the Institute, including Dr. Yohei Sasakawa (Chairman, The Nippon Foundation) and Professor Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry (President, World Maritime University).

Professor Attard stated that the graduation ceremony is the climax of an eventful, at times turbulent, journey which the Institute, together with its graduands, had to undertake. He recorded his satisfaction that despite the pressures, dangers and limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, IMLI continued with its teaching, adding that “...today’s body of graduands reflects the success of our efforts.”

In commending the graduands Professor Attard stated “...you deserve our respect for persevering during the pandemic. You have my admiration for your commitment and dedication. Earning a degree in this time shows your tenacious character. You endured and succeeded, and for that we salute you.” Professor Attard informed them that their future achievements will continue to consolidate the Institute’s academic reputation as they are now IMLI Ambassadors, dedicated to serving the rule of international maritime law. He concluded by wishing them well in their endeavours.



Graduands taking the Oath of Allegiance

Reproduced below is the Welcome Address delivered by the Director:

Welcome Address by the Director at the

IMLI Graduation Virtual Ceremony, 3 September 2021

'Teaching of International Maritime Law in the COVID Pandemic'

Your Excellency IMO-Secretary General,
Honourable Minister for Sustainable Development of Malta,
Chairman, The Nippon Foundation,
President, World Maritime University,
Opposition Spokesman for the Green Economy,
Permanent Representatives to IMO,
Excellencies,
Members of the IMLI Governing Board,
Director, IMO Technical Cooperation Division,
Chairman of Transport Malta,
Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, Malta
Graduands,
Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you to IMLI's 32nd Graduation Ceremony celebrating the academic success of our graduands.

At the outset I would like to thank Mr. Kitack Lim, the IMO Secretary-General and Chairman of the IMLI Governing Board who despite his heavy commitments has graciously agreed to address us. Secretary-General, I would like on behalf of the IMLI staff and students to take this opportunity to convey our deepest appreciation for the generous interest you continue to take in our work and the welfare of the Institute.

We are particularly pleased that two distinguished supporters of IMLI have also agreed to address us on this important day. I refer to Dr. Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of the Nippon

Foundation, who has for over a decade supported morally and financially hundreds of lawyers from developing countries to train at IMLI. I would also like to recognise Professor Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry who since her appointment as President, World Maritime University has actively cooperated with IMLI, particularly in the setting up of joint teaching programmes.

I also wish to recognise the attendance of the Honourable Minister Carmelo Abela, Minister for Sustainable Development in the Office of the Prime Minister. His presence today reflects the continuing commitment which the Government of Malta has extended to IMLI over the past 32 years. I am particularly grateful to His Excellency Dr. George Vella (President of the Republic of Malta) who visited the Institute on 24 November 2020 and addressed the IMLI Class of 2021.

Distinguished Guests,

Today's Ceremony is the culmination of an eventful, at times turbulent, journey which nonetheless has been successfully completed. Indeed, we are happy that despite the pressures, dangers and limitations imposed by the COVID pandemic, IMLI continued with its teaching uninterrupted. It seems to me that today's body of graduands reflects the fruits of our efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The prevailing global health situation and the strict travel requirements obliged the Institute to commence the academic year 2020-2021 online. Without a script to follow, our graduands and staff worked hard and have had to overcome many obstacles. Over the past eleven months, we have all learnt how to navigate through the treacherous COVID-19 waters. I, therefore, feel particularly proud of this class' achievements. The graduands have had to face the challenges

of a virtual learning experience with remote classes, meetings, and exams, while braving a perfect storm of hazards. Against these headwinds, they have succeeded.

Ladies and gentlemen,

IMLI is a small institution with a global mission: to train government officials and practitioners to serve the rule of international maritime law. Our main goal is to develop national legal expertise to advise Governments on the incorporation and effective implementation of IMO conventions and prescriptions through national legislation. We are confident that today we have world class training programmes which develop the necessary skills thereby ensuring the sustainability of national legal expertise. The quality of the Institute's training is evident in the requests of IMO Member States to have their finest officers admitted to its programmes. From its modest beginnings, with circa 19 participants every year in the 1990s, IMLI has grown into welcoming the 2021 Class which recorded 49 Master and five Advanced Diploma students. Moreover, three students are graduating from the M.Jur. Programme and one is being bestowed the prestigious Ph.D. degree. I am pleased to announce that despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute has received over 100 government nominated applications for its Master programmes in the coming academic year.

The academic year 2020-2021 shone a particularly bright light on the vital importance of capacity-building. While dealing with the ongoing pandemic, the Institute remained committed in delivering its mission through training in international maritime law of the highest educational standards. IMLI developed innovative methods of teaching utilising the very latest technologies and tools.

I am pleased to inform you that one of the few positive aspects of the COVID pandemic was the development of IMLI online specialised programmes which IMO Member States utilised. In this academic year the Institute launched seven specialised courses, namely, the IMO Work Operational Aspects Programme, the Law of Treaties Programme, the IMLI Course on the Law of Ports, the IMLI Course on Seafarers' Rights, the IMLI Course on the Protection of the Marine Environment and Ocean Governance, the IMLI Course on the International Maritime Security Law, the IMLI Course on the Peaceful Settlement of Maritime Disputes, and the IMLI Course on the Delimitation of Maritime Disputes. I am particularly satisfied with the very positive response of the international community, especially the Permanent Missions to IMO who nominated high-ranking officers to attend these specialized courses. Indeed, we were honoured by the attendance of some Permanent Representatives themselves. This process, we feel, consolidated IMLI's status as a centre of training in international maritime law, and increased our global outreach; 786 government nominated participants from 134 States attended these programmes. In fact, governments who participated in these programmes nominated for the first time their officers to our 2021-2022 Master programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Institute's success is also the result of the institutional links it maintains with many organizations. I wish to refer in particular to the Institute's institutional linkage with IMO, which provides it with substantial support. I am particularly grateful to the IMO Secretary-General who takes a keen interest in the Institute's activities. He welcomed warmly the IMLI class of 2021 on their first day of the academic year and addressed them again on two different occasions. My sincere appreciation goes to the Technical Co-operation Division which, through the Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme, has funded over the years access to quality training for over 200 government nominated candidates who are now proudly serving

their countries. Thanks to the assistance of the Director of the Technical Cooperation Division, the Institute welcomed this year numerous IMO officials, including all the IMO Divisions' Director, who delivered lectures in the IMO Work Operational Aspects Programme, thereby giving our students a unique insight into the extensive work of the Organization.

Teaching at IMLI also focuses on practical training and networking. The Institute collaborates with eminent scholars and practitioners from prestigious institutions. During the academic year 2020-2021 the Institute received visiting fellows from world renowned universities such as Sophia University (Tokyo), Hamburg, Basel, Ankara, Wollongong, the Australian National University, Ferrara, Ljubljana, WMU and from international organizations such as ITLOS, ICJ, EMSA, IMSO, and UNCTAD.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In its efforts to consolidate its academic reputation, the Institute promotes research, publications and international seminars.

The three-volume "IMLI Treatise on Global Ocean Governance", published by Oxford University Press continues to receive widespread appreciation. The Treatise, which is the product of the fruitful collaboration between IMLI and The Nippon Foundation, contains comprehensive studies by 58 leading experts on crucial areas of ocean governance.

This publication complements "The IMLI Manual on International Maritime Law", which has become a reliable source of international maritime law used by government officials, academics, and practitioners.

The book entitled “Autonomous Ships and the Law” which was edited by Henrik Ringbom, Erik Røsæg, and Trond Solvang was published by Routledge under the book series “IMLI Studies in International Maritime Law”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In its pursuit to contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Institute continues to expand its activities. I would like to make special reference to a unique initiative of the Institute to promote to the empowerment of women in maritime affairs entitled “IMOGEN Women-on-Board”. Launched on 9 March 2021, this initiative, which is the first at an IMO level, matched an IMLI female student with an experienced IMOGENder member who has provided her with the tools and advice she needs to realise her potential and advance her professional development.

Distinguished guests,

As an institution of specialized training for international maritime law experts, we are extremely proud of our alumni. Since 1989, the Institute has trained over 1100 maritime experts, mostly working for government agencies, particularly maritime administrations, in over 150 States. I am pleased to record that this year the Democratic Republic of Congo, Paraguay, Singapore, Republic of Korea, and Sweden have benefited for the first time from the quality of the IMLI training.

I welcome today’s graduands to this elite network of international maritime law specialists, numerous members of which now occupy significant positions in their respective fields and are instrumental in the development and dissemination of international maritime law.

Distinguished guests,

None of these achievements would be possible without the support of our generous donors who believe in IMLI's mission. Our gratitude extends to the Government of Malta, which has hosted the Institute since its inception.

We are grateful to our relationship with The Nippon Foundation, which over the past 18 years has produced a unique network of maritime professionals who are upholding the principles of IMLI and of The Nippon Foundation.

We are proud of our relationship with the prestigious Lloyds' Register Foundation which has over the years assisted IMLI through the funding of candidates.

At IMLI we have always been keen to highlight the human dimension of international maritime law. In this respect, we focus on the welfare of seafarers who are constantly facing the perils and challenges of the sea. I would like to recognize the invaluable assistance of the ITF Seafarers' Trust and its contribution to the training of government officials undertaking IMLI programmes.

At this point, I would also like to express my appreciation for the sterling work of the Institute's Resident Faculty: Professor Norman Martínez, Professor Malgosia Fitzmaurice, Ms. Elda Belja, Dr. Ángeles Jiménez, Dr. Sanjeet Ruhel, Mr. Murat Sumer and Ms. Ramat Jalloh as well as to the Administrative Staff for their unwavering support.

Distinguished guests,

Allow me to reserve my concluding remarks for today's graduands as their accomplishments are very important to us. Over this last academic year they have demonstrated passion, commitment, hard work and a spirit of tolerance – values which I am confident they will maintain.

Dear Graduands,

This is not the graduation ceremony we envisioned. The COVID pandemic forced it on us. You deserve our respect for persevering during the pandemic. You have my admiration for your commitment and dedication. Earning a degree in this time shows your tenacious character. You endured and succeeded, and for that we salute you.

Please however remember that your participation in the IMLI programmes is an opportunity granted to a few well-chosen professionals. This privilege carries with it a responsibility which I am confident you will bear with great pride. Indeed, through your training, IMLI contributes - in its small way - to the IMO's and its Member States goals and objectives.

I congratulate all of you, and I wish you all further success in your respective professional careers. 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 IMLI Ambassadors, dedicated to serving the rule of international maritime law. I wish you well in your endeavours.

We are proud of you and I am confident that you will make IMLI proud!

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