

# IMLI *e*-NEWS

THE IMO INTERNATIONAL MARITIME LAW INSTITUTE OFFICIAL ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

*Circulated in more than 150 States*



## THE IMLI 35TH GRADUATION CEREMONY



The IMO International Maritime Law Institute held its 35th Graduation Ceremony on Saturday, 29 June 2024. The Ceremony marked the successful completion of an intensive year of studies in all areas of international maritime law, including law of the sea, shipping law, marine environmental law and ocean governance, maritime safety and security law, and maritime legislation drafting.

IMLI's simulcast Graduation Ceremony, which can be viewed [here](#), was presided over by Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco (IMO Secretary-General and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board) and was attended by many dignitaries, including the Director of the IMO Technical Cooperation and



Implementation Division, the President of World Maritime University (WMU), the President of the Comité Maritime International (CMI), as well as representatives from esteemed donors, the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM), the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJ), the Italian Military Mission, the Sierra Leone Maritime Administration, and Members of the Diplomatic Corps. Family members and friends were also in attendance to share in this joyous occasion with the graduands.

During the Ceremony, 69 students from 38 countries graduated from the Institute's various programmes. 50 students were awarded the Degree of Master of Laws (LL.M.) in International Maritime Law, 12 students were awarded the Degree of Master of Humanities (M.Hum.) in International Maritime Legislation and seven students were awarded an Advanced Diploma in International Maritime Law. The 2024 Graduates now form part of an elite network of international maritime law specialists, who have also received sterling training at IMLI.

The Welcoming Address was delivered by Professor Dr. Martínez Gutiérrez. Mr. Domínguez Velasco delivered the Graduation Address and the Valedictory Address on behalf of the IMLI Class of 2023-2024 was delivered by Ms. Patience Ella Diaba (Ghana).

In his Welcoming Address, Professor Dr. Martínez Gutiérrez welcomed the dignitaries and guests to the Graduation Ceremony, and stated that this year has been a remarkable year of many firsts and several milestones, which he went on to state in detail. The Director informed the audience that the graduating class is the largest class in IMLI's history and that they were the first to attend classes in the Institute's new state-of-art Auditorium (courtesy of the Government of Malta). The 2024 graduands, the Director observed, attended for the first time the meeting of the IMO Legal Committee since the field trip was organized for the first time during the academic year, and the first to attended the first ever international conference organized by the Institute.



*Professor Dr. Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez  
(Director, IMLI) delivering the Welcoming  
Address*

The Director was proud to announce that IMLI celebrated this year, 35 years in the service of the rule of international maritime law, recording that since its modest beginnings, IMLI has become *THE* world centre of excellence, where maritime professionals are trained in the full spectrum of international maritime law to serve their countries, the maritime industry and the international maritime community at large, in the incorporation and effective implementation of IMO conventions and prescriptions through national legislation.

He stated further that the successful delivery of the Institute's mission is reflected in the substantial contributions being made by the over 1,110 IMLI graduates in over 150 States, around the world and proudly noted that many graduates hold the highest positions in their respective countries while others are representing their countries at IMO. These graduates, he added, have mastered the capacity to think independently, to intellectually challenge the *status quo* for the benefit of all and, due to the family environment of the Institute, they have enhanced qualities of character which include tolerance, compassion, and empathy.

The Director expressed the Institute's renewed commitment to contribute actively and directly to the delivery of the Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme activities through thematic capacity-building initiatives which raise awareness and disseminate knowledge and expertise in the pressing areas of the Organization. He mentioned, in particular, the first IMLI award of a Research Degree Fellowship for a deserving candidate to carry out research in the topic of the Legal framework for liability in the context of maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS) and also the expansion of the Institute's global outreach, especially through the delivery of its hybrid specialised courses.

Professor Dr. Martínez Gutiérrez went on to express his sincere appreciation to the IMO Technical Co-operation and Implementation Division which, through the Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme has financed the studies of many of the day's graduates. He acknowledged with gratitude the generous support of the Institute's donors, The Nippon Foundation, the Lloyds' Register Foundation, the ITF Seafarers' Trust, the International Group of P&I Clubs, the International Chamber of Shipping, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the European Maritime Safety Agency. He also conveyed appreciation for the support of the Governments of Ghana, Malaysia, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea, and Saudi Arabia for their generous funding which enabled the training of some excellent government officers.



*Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco  
(Secretary-General, IMO and  
Chairman, IMLI Governing Board)  
and  
Professor Dr. Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez  
(Director, IMLI)*

The Director also recognized with appreciation the IMLI Staff (past and present), IMLI's past Directors, and its Governing Bodies, and in particular the Institute's Resident Faculty for the sterling work they do.

In concluding, he told the graduating class that maritime is an ever-evolving industry and so is its regulation thereby encouraging them to always remember that they are part of something bigger and to be an inspiration to others. He congratulated them and wished them all possible success in their respective professional careers.



*Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco (Secretary-General, IMO and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board), Professor Dr. Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez (Director, IMLI) with the IMLI Staff*



*Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco (Secretary-General, IMO and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board), Dr. Ann Fenech (President, Comité Maritime International) and Professor Dr. Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez (Director, IMLI)*



*Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco (Secretary-General, IMO and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board), Professor Dr. Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez (Director, IMLI), Professor Max Mejia (President, WMU), and Mr. Jose Matheickal (Director, Technical Cooperation and Implementation Division, IMO) visiting the 35th Anniversary exhibition on Graduation Day*



*Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco (Secretary-General, IMO and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board), Professor Dr. Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez (Director, IMLI), Professor Max Mejia (President, WMU), and Mr. Jose Matheickal (Director, Technical Cooperation and Implementation Division, IMO)*



Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco (IMO Secretary-General and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board), commenced the Graduation Address by expressing his appreciation to those who have made it possible for the 69 graduands of the Class of 2024 to receive the IMLI training, that is, the donors, the Government of Malta, the Institute's Director, Professor Dr. Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez and both its Academic and Administrative staff, who every year welcome these incredible professionals, transforming them and enriching their professional lives.

He congratulated the graduands for having taken an additional step into their future and encouraged them to be bold and confident about their newly acquired expertise and their potential. He spurred them further to take the opportunities that will come due to their IMLI training, noting that although some of these will come with challenges, they should not doubt that they can be surmounted and great lessons can be learnt therefrom. Mr. Domínguez Velasco reminded the members of the Class of 2024 of the advantage they have gained at IMLI through the friendships they have forged over the months with each other, with the Institute itself and the IMO, which have now become a support team around them, and will always be able and happy to lend them a helping hand.

The Secretary-General reminded the graduands of the great importance of diversity and inclusion, values he wishes to enhance further in the maritime sector. He expressed his belief that although shipping has traditionally been a male dominated sector, it can be changed and that he is committed to contributing to that change for the better. He noted the Institute's focus on gender parity, noting especially that the staff of IMLI is made up of 65% women, which he noted is something to applaud because not all organizations around the world have been able to achieve that in such a short period of time. He also registered his concern for change for the plight of Seafarers.

Mr. Domínguez Velasco also reminded the graduands of the great opportunities awaiting them. He informed them that IMLI graduates are now Directors of IMO Divisions, some are IMO staff and many are delegates at IMO meetings.

He concluded by congratulating them and expressed his hope that the IMLI experience has been a very enriching one for them. He also relayed his wish of seeing them in the future, either in their respective home countries, at IMO, back at IMLI, or *“anywhere in the world that this amazing industry continues to bring us to each other.”*

Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco  
(Secretary-General, IMO and Chairman,  
IMLI Governing Board) delivering the  
Graduation Address



The Valedictory Address on behalf of the IMLI Class of 2023-2024 was delivered by Ms. Patience Ella Diaba (Ghana). She commenced by stating that the graduation day marks the culmination of months of hard work and perseverance, which has been made possible by the unwavering support of many gathered in the hall.

In this respect, she acknowledged the host country, Malta, the Secretary-General of the IMO, for gracing the occasion and stated that *“Your guidance and support has been instrumental in our journey, and we are privileged to share this significant occasion with you. Your leadership and unwavering commitment to promoting safe, secure, and sustainable shipping and mostly your stalwart support to women in maritime has been an inspiration to us all.”*

Ms. Diaba also acknowledged the Director, by stating that his vision and dedication have created an environment where students could thrive and grow both academically and personally. She stated further that *“Your efforts in fostering a global community of maritime law professionals is truly commendable. You have not only led us with wisdom but also with a passion that has motivated us to strive for excellence.”*



Ms. Patience Ella Diaba (Ghana)  
delivering the Valedictory Address  
on behalf of the IMLI Class of  
2023-2024

She also expressed appreciation to the academic staff, for their dedication, expert knowledge, and mentorship which was the foundation of their success, stating that *“You have challenged us to think critically, act ethically, and to strive for excellence. You have not only imparted knowledge but also inspired us to be leaders in the maritime, technical and legal fields. For this, we are deeply grateful.”* Ms. Diaba also extended her heartfelt gratitude to the administrative staff for their hard work and dedication behind the scenes, which have been invaluable, noting that their unstinting support made their journey at the Institute comfortable.

To families and loved ones, she said *“your endless support, sacrifices, and encouragement have been our anchor through the challenging seas of academic life. Your belief in our potential has driven us to reach this milestone. Today, we share this achievement with you.”*

To her fellow graduates, she expressed hearty congratulations, noting *“Our journey here began - it seems like only a few months ago - with a shared passion for knowledge that governs the use of our oceans. Today, we celebrate the culmination of our hard work and the beginning of a new chapter in our lives. Our voyage has been marked by countless hours of study, lively debates, and the forging of lifelong friendships. Together, we have navigated the complexities of international maritime law. Despite the stormy waves and strong winds, we have arrived at a place we can call a safe port because of the stability and buoyancy of our double-hull ship, MV IMLI 2023-2024. Long Live IMLI!”*

## PRIZES AWARDED DURING IMLI'S 35TH GRADUATION CEREMONY



The Recipients of the Prizes awarded during IMLI's 35th Graduation Ceremony are (from L-R):

*IMO Secretary-General's Prize for Best Dissertation:*  
**Mr. Chrispine Limbikani Kalusa (Malawi)**

*Government of Malta Prize for the Best Maritime Legislation Drafting Project:*  
**Mr. Ante Vojkovic (Croatia)**

*Professor David Attard Prize for Best Performance in the Law of the Sea:*  
**Ms. Sedigheh Zarei (the Islamic Republic of Iran)**

*Transport Malta Prize for Best Performance in Shipping Law:*  
**LCDR Lovely Rose Z. Catayen (the Philippines)**

*Sasakawa Prize for the Best Performing Nippon Foundation Scholar:*  
**Mr. Ramadhan J. Ngogo (the United Republic of Tanzania)**

*Dr. Kofi Mbiah's Prize for the Best Performing African Scholar:*  
**Ms. Buadi Madeleine Ma Adjoa (Ghana)**

*ITF Seafarers' Trust Prize on Seafarers' Law:*  
**Mr. Obada Arachchige Sheran Madhawa Perera (Sri Lanka)**

*Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (Malta Branch) Prize for Best Performance in Maritime Transport Law:*  
**Mr. Amosa Moegafou (Tuvalu)**

*REMPEC Marine Environment Law Prize:*  
**Ms. Diane Cutajar (Malta)**

*CMI Prize for Best Overall Performance:*  
**Mr. Ante Vojkovic (Croatia)**



*Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco (Secretary-General, IMO and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board) unveiling the plaque commemorating IMLI's 35th Anniversary*



*Mr. Arsenio Antonio Domínguez Velasco (Secretary-General, IMO and Chairman, IMLI Governing Board), Professor Dr. Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez (Director, IMLI), Professor Max Mejía (President, WMU), Mr. Jose Matheickal (Director, Technical Cooperation and Implementation Division, IMO), IMLI Faculty Members, and the 2023-2024 IMLI Graduates*