

ADDRESS BY
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MINISTRY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND TRANSPORT &
SHIPPING
ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD MARITIME DAY
SEA TRAINING SCHOOL, GUY ROZEMONT SQUARE, PORT LOUIS
Thursday, 28 September 2006 at 10 00 hrs

Dr the Hon Acting Prime Minister

Honourable Ministers

Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps

Ladies and Gentlemen

According to a well established tradition, the IMO Secretary General, Mr Efthimios Mitropoulos, issues every year a circular to invite all member states, UN and specialised agencies, Inter-governmental Organisations and Non-government Organisations in consultative status to celebrate the World Maritime Day during the last week of September.

Mauritius is proud to be associated with such a prestigious organisation like the IMO. Since its inception in 1948, the IMO has been able to group almost the entire world community. It has today a membership of 166 countries and 36 inter-governmental and 63 non-governmental organisations. It has been able to mobilize its members on different issues dealing with the security, protection and enhancement of the maritime sector. To date the IMO has in its

statute book an impressive number of Conventions of prime importance, agreed to by Member States. Let me mention a few of them:

- (a) International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974;
- (b) International Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), 1973 – 1978;
- (c) Convention on International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (1972);
- (d) International Convention on Standards on Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (1995); and
- (e) International Convention on Search and Rescue at Sea (1979).

This year, as you have been told, the theme which has been chosen by the IMO is “Technical Cooperation: IMO’s response to the 2005 World Summit”.

In a speech delivered in New York at the 2005 World Summit which examined progress on the Millennium Declaration, Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos, Secretary General, enumerated the main activities of the IMO on maritime security e.g. drafting of the international conventions, capacity building measures, provision of training courses

at different levels, audio visual materials, collaboration with other international bodies to eliminate as far as possible threats to maritime activities.

The IMO Secretary General reminds us that the adoption six years ago of the Millennium Declaration by the UN General Assembly was a defining moment for global cooperation in the 21st century. The Declaration sets out, within a single framework, the key challenges facing humanity at the threshold of the new millennium, outlines the response that the world community should provide to these challenges and establishes concrete means for judging performance. The measures to realize the challenges are embodied in the Millennium Development Goals commonly known as MDGs.

IMO strongly supports the MDGs and considers that it has a major role to play in at least five of the MDGs namely:

- To eradicate extremely poverty and hunger
- To promote gender equality and empower women
- To combat HIV/Aids and other
- To ensure environmental sustainability
- To develop a global partnership for development

Maritime activity helps in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger as it provides an important source of income and employment for many developing countries. As you know, the goal is to halve poverty by year 2015.

As regards gender equality, the IMO has put up a programme for the Integration of Women in the maritime sector and has encouraged the establishment of formal regional associations to increase women' participation.

In respect of HIV aids and other diseases, the IMO notes that it is sad but almost the inevitable truth that workers in maritime transport can too easily contribute to the transmission of diseases. It has therefore ensured that the training programme of the workforce should focus on methods to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. We, in Mauritius, should do the same for our seafarers.

As far as the issue of environmental sustainability is concerned, a wide array of measures has been developed and adopted by the IMO to improve ship safety, reduce accidents and prevent sea pollution. The measures range from the management of ships' ballast water to prevent the unwanted transport of potentially harmful micro-organisms across the globe to the restriction of toxic substances in ships' hull coatings.

Finally, as regards global partnership for development, the IMO's vibrant Technical Cooperation Programme has produced wonderful results and has enabled maritime services all over the world to collaborate in a meaningful manner and thereby boost their economies.

As far as the special needs of Africa are concerned, IMO has allocated additional amounts from its Technical Cooperation Fund to finance

the action plans of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Furthermore, IMO is helping African Maritime Institutions to upgrade their facilities, and we, in Mauritius have apprised the Secretary of IMO of the construction of the new Maritime Centre and requested for IMO support, especially at the initial stage of the operations of the new Centre.

Ladies and Gentlemen

One of the themes hammered by many Heads of States and Governments at the UN General Assembly is global warming. They are of the view that climate change poses a huge challenge to all nations and that an unstable climate will undermine our progress in all areas that matter to mankind because of more droughts, floods and dangerous rising sea levels.

In a recent interview with the French magazine Paris Match, the former Vice President of the United States, Mr Al Gore who has championed the ecological cause in many international fora had this to say:

« Le réchauffement de la planète est de loin la plus grave menace que nous ayons eu à affronter dans toute l'histoire de l'humanité. Si nous n'agissons pas elle peut mettre un terme à la civilisation »

As 90% of international trade is seaborne, we can easily imagine the high scale of disruption which rising sea levels can cause to the

movements of ships and its negative economic impact on the world economy, particularly that of small island states like Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We shall not end on a negative note. Along with the IMO and other UN agencies we can take up the challenge, act together with due sense of responsibility towards our planet and future generations. We are confident that, we, in Mauritius, while celebrating the World Maritime Day, can add our voice to the concert of nations in claiming for more security for our ships, and our seafarers. To this end, it gives me great pleasure to mention the initiative of the Acting Prime Minister in chairing himself the newly formed Shipping Development Forum which is a high level advisory body, comprising all the stakeholders in our maritime sector.

Before I resume my seat, I should like to thank all the Government officers and private sector representatives who have collaborated for the harmonious organisation of the World Maritime Day Celebration.

I thank you for your attention.