

Rising to challenges ahead

Tuesday 29 January 2008

IT WAS, for me, a great privilege and honour to be given the opportunity to continue serving the organisation until the end of 2011.

In sharing my vision for the future with the assembly, I expressed determination to “win people’s hearts and minds to work (with members, observers and staff alike) towards a common goal” so that, together, we can focus our collective efforts on the principal challenges facing the International Maritime Organization, namely:

- Keeping alive the spirit of last year’s World Maritime Day theme, on responding successfully to environmental challenges. We should intensify our efforts to improve, implement and enforce all the marine environment-related instruments we have put in place; and to bring those in the pipeline (especially the measures we are contemplating to reduce shipping’s contribution to atmospheric pollution; and our work on ship recycling) to a successful conclusion within the agreed timeframes or, wherever possible, even sooner. In being pro-active in this respect, not only will we be sending a strong message about our commitment to a cleaner environment, we will also state, unequivocally, that we are driven by our own green agenda out of our own concern and sensitivity about the environment. Last December’s Climate Change Conference in Bali produced a universal agreement on a roadmap that will lead to the adoption of a new global regime in 2009. IMO must and will play its part in that process, maintaining momentum and further expediting its continuing work in this area.
- Maintaining the safety of life at sea as IMO’s principal objective. Work to further progress the “goal-based standard” concept and on the comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and on all other matters pertaining to ship and seafarer safety should continue unabated, as planned.
- Continuing to address the security issue as one that allows for no complacency in the prevention and suppression of unlawful acts (including piracy and armed robbery against ships) that may cost dearly in terms of human lives, property and the environment; whilst also bringing to fruition the LRIT system, within the agreed timetable.
- Consolidating and further promoting the voluntary IMO member state audit scheme, which had a very successful initial implementation phase during the last biennium.
- Giving emphasis, in line with the organisation’s strategic plan and high-level action plan, to our continuing efforts on the safety of non-convention ships; on the outcome of marine accident investigations; on the role of the human element; on improving the port state control non-compliance rate by promoting greater efforts by all parties in the chain of responsibility and on raising the profile, environmental consciousness and, thus, the quality of international shipping.

I hope that all concerned, individually and collectively, will, in this and the years to come, play their role, positively and constructively, in facing the challenges that lie ahead and, thus, continue serving well the causes of enhanced safety, security, efficiency and environmental protection.

I wish the maritime community at large a happy, health and successful, accident-free New Year.