

## **IMO launches “Year of the Seafarer”**

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) “launched” the theme for this year’s World Maritime Day – **“2010: Year of the Seafarer”** – at an event held at its London headquarters yesterday (11 January 2010), co-hosted with the International Shipping Federation (ISF) and the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF).

Speaking at the event, IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos said 2010 promised to be an auspicious and important year for the seafaring profession, with a diplomatic conference meeting in Manila in June to adopt amendments that will bring the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (the STCW Convention), and its associated Code, fully up to date with today’s expectations.

Mr Mitropoulos said that designating 2010 as the Year of the Seafarer would help to reassure those who work at the “sharp end” of the industry – the seafarers themselves – that those responsible for the international regulatory regime understand the extreme pressures seafarers face and that they approach their task with a genuine sympathy for the work that seafarers carry out. The theme had also been chosen, he said, to allow the maritime community to pay tribute to seafarers for their unique contribution to society and in recognition of the vital part they play in the facilitation of global trade. It would also add impetus to the “Go to Sea!” campaign, which was launched by IMO in November 2008, in association with the International Labour Organization, the “Round Table” of international shipping associations and ITF, to boost recruitment to the seafaring profession.

A former seafarer himself, Mr. Mitropoulos said, “It is my firm belief that, despite the numerical decline in officer-level entrants, shipping remains a potentially exciting, rewarding and fulfilling career – a career that can take people almost anywhere, both in geographical terms and in terms of the sort of work they may finally find themselves doing. Seafaring is not only a satisfying and worthwhile career choice in itself, it is also a passport to a huge variety of related jobs ashore for which experience at sea will make one eminently qualified.”

He concluded, “Seafarers deserve respect and recognition: let us resolve, during 2010, to ensure that this message is trumpeted loud and clear.”

Those addressing the event included Mr. Peter Brady, Chairman of IMO's Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping, which is in session this week, Mr. Spyros Polemis, President of the ISF, and Mr. Jon Whitlow, representing the ITF.

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**Photographs available on request.**

IMO – the International Maritime Organization – is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships.

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