Report from IMO
IMO Assembly confirms Secretary-General’s re-appointment

The 25th biennial meeting of the IMO Assembly has unanimously confirmed the decision of the Organization’s Council to extend the appointment of Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos for a further term of four years, for the period from 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2011.

Admiral Mitropoulos thanked delegates for the continuing trust they had placed in him and for their unfailing understanding and co-operation during his first four years as Secretary-General. He also thanked the Secretariat for its hard work and support.

In sharing with the IMO Members his vision for the future, he said that, in the years to come, the focus of the many challenges facing the Organization should be on:

Keeping alive the spirit of this year’s World Maritime Day theme, on responding successfully to environmental challenges

“We should,” he said “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) to a successful conclusion within the agreed timeframe 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.”

Retaining the safety of life at sea as IMO’s principal objective

In this respect, he highlighted the importance of work to “further progress the ‘goal-based standard’ concept, in anticipation of the
beneficial impact it will certainly have, among other things, on overseeing the performance of recognized organizations. Apace with that, we should seek progress on the comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and on all matters pertaining to seafarer safety.”

Continuing to address maritime security

This was an issue, he said, 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”. At the same time, efforts would continue to bring the LRIT system to successful fruition.

The Voluntary IMO Member State Audit Scheme

With regard to consolidation and further promotion of the Voluntary IMO Member State Audit Scheme, Admiral Mitropoulos emphasized, “has had a very successful initial implementation phase during the current biennium”. Giving emphasis, he said, in line with the Organization’s Strategic Plan and High-level Action Plan, to IMO’s “ongoing efforts in areas such as the safety of non-Convention ships; the outcome of marine accident investigations; the role of the human element; improving the port State control non-compliance rate by promoting greater efforts by all parties in the chain of responsibility; and promoting and raising the profile, environmental consciousness and, thus, the quality of international shipping”.

In conclusion

Continuing “to support fully”, he concluded, “those entrusted by the Membership to lead the Organization’s various bodies; and also for the Secretariat, who spare no effort to provide sound advice and assistance”.

Appealing to Members to continue working together, His Excellency expressed confidence in IMO succeeding in its efforts to respond to the expectations of the maritime community and, thus, ensuring that the Organization would remain relevant now and in the future.