A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD’S SEAFARERS

On Christmas Eve IMO announced that it had decided to dedicate the year 2010 to the world’s seafarers by choosing, as the theme for World Maritime Day, “2010: Year of the Seafarer”.

In the words of Admiral Efthimios Mitropoulos, Secretary-General of IMO, “Our intention is to pay tribute to you, the world’s 1.5 million seafarers – men and women from all over the globe – for the unique, and all too often over-looked, contribution you make to the wellbeing of all of us.

“We will do so with deep appreciation, in recognition of the extraordinary service you render every day of your professional life, frequently under dangerous circumstances, in delivering, to the more than 6.5 billion people of the world, the wheat that makes our daily bread, the gas and oil that warms our homes or moves our vehicles and the gifts we will share and enjoy with our families and friends over this Festive Season.

“At IMO, we are ever-conscious of the important role you play in helping us achieve safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans – the goals that we, as the United Nations specialized agency charged with the regulation of international shipping and as a member of the global maritime community, have set ourselves.

“And so, we will celebrate next year’s World Maritime Day theme with much pride in your contribution to our objectives, to the facilitation of more than 90% of the world’s trade, and to sustainable human development.

“In so doing, we also seek to reassure you, at the “sharp end” of the industry, that we, who are responsible for the international regulatory regime and who serve shipping from ashore, do understand the extreme pressures that you face and that, as a result, we approach our own tasks with a genuine sympathy for the work that you carry out.

“At the same time, we will seek to add impetus to the Go to Sea! campaign, which we launched in November 2008 to attract new entrants to the shipping industry and, in particular, to encourage young people to follow in your footsteps by becoming the seafarers of tomorrow. We launched that campaign in association with the International Labour Organization, the Round Table of shipping industry organizations (International Chamber of Shipping, International Shipping Federation, BIMCO, International Association of Independent Tanker Owners and International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners) and the International Transport Workers’ Federation, all of whom will be joining us in celebrating the Year of the Seafarer.

“Last, but mostly importantly, we want to convey to you a clear message that the entire shipping community understands and cares for you – as shown by the efforts
we make to ensure that you are fairly treated when ships on which you serve become involved in accidents; are looked after when you are abandoned in ports; are not refused shore leave for security purposes; are protected when your work takes you into piracy-infested areas; and are not left unaided when you are in distress at sea.

“1.5 million seafarers serving the daily needs of more then 6.5 billion citizens of the world! It is a fact that goes unnoticed or is taken for granted by most, but one that should be trumpeted loud and clear. For seafarers the world over deserve our respect, recognition and gratitude and, during 2010, we at IMO are resolved to ensure that the world does take notice of your exceptional role and contribution and of the special debt that all of us owe to you. We thank you for that!

“With best wishes for the Festive Season and the Year of the Seafarer – and a safe return home!”