



CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON
STANDARDS OF TRAINING,
CERTIFICATION AND WATCHKEEPING
FOR SEAFARERS, 1978

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**OPENING ADDRESS BY Mr. E. E. MITROPOULOS
SECRETARY-GENERAL
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION**

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Mr. Vice-President, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, MARINA Administrator, Commandant of the Philippines Coast Guard, President of the IMO Assembly, Secretary-General Emeritus, Heads of international shipping organizations, distinguished delegates and observers, media representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to **welcome** you to this Conference. The presence here today of the Vice-President of the Republic of the Philippines, **His Excellency Noli De Castro**, does a great honour to the International Maritime Organization and the Parties to the Convention we have come here to Manila to revise – I thank you for that, Mr. Vice-President, and I should be most grateful if you would convey to **Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**, who, in spite of her long expressed wish to attend this ceremony, could not be with us this morning, our special greetings and heartfelt thanks for inviting us to Manila and offering to host this Conference.

Your presence here, Mr. Vice-President, also shows the importance and significance the Government of the Philippines as a whole attaches to shipping and all matters maritime – especially to seafarers and their proper education and training, which is the subject of this Conference. It would not, could not, be otherwise, coming from a country that supplies more than 25% of the world population of seafarers.

It must have been with this impressive figure in mind that the IMO membership unanimously accepted, two years ago, the generous offer of the Philippines to host this Conference. And here we are: **first** and **foremost** to recognize the contribution of the Philippines to shipping and the international seaborne trade and pay our due tribute for that. And also to pay due tribute to Filipino seafarers, past and present, wherever in the world they may be at this very moment, facing the elements, unsung heroes of an unsung industry. Our thoughts and prayers go out, in particular, to the 65 Filipinos from 4 ships, who are kept hostage by Somali pirates. May they, and all other hostages, be released and repatriated soon. This same recognition and tribute goes also to their families for all the sacrifices they endure when left behind alone. And, although in a celebratory mood during this auspicious ceremony, we cannot but turn our thoughts and prayers also to those Filipino seafarers, who lost their lives in the line of duty – and to their families, who were deprived of their natural protectors. This, unfortunately, is the fate of the sea, as the Philippines, a maritime nation of a thousand islands, knows only too well.

So, thank you to the Government of the Philippines for inviting us to this great Capital City and “thank you” to you, Mr. Vice-President; to the Honourable **Mr. Marianito D. Roque**, Secretary, Department of Labour and Employment; and the Honourable **Ms. Anneli R. Lontoc**, Acting Secretary, Department of Transportation and Communications of the Republic of the Philippines, for being with us this morning and for your strong support to the Conference.

Among the other dignitaries honouring this Conference, I would mention, in particular, the President of the IMO Assembly, H.E. the German Ambassador to the Court of St. James and Permanent Representative to IMO, **Mr. Georg Boomgaarden**; the Chairman of the IMO Council, **Mr. Jeff Lantz** of the United States; and my distinguished predecessor Secretary-General Emeritus **Mr. William O’Neil**.

Making this splendid and historic venue available in Manila’s renowned bay area, along with the provision of excellent facilities and services to ensure the successful running and outcome of the Conference in the best traditions of IMO, is also greatly appreciated. **Our special thanks for all these outstanding services are extended to: Mr. Angelo Verdan**, Administrator, Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) and his staff; and to His Excellency Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Court of St. James and Permanent Representative to IMO, **Mr. Antonio M. Lagdameo** and his assistants, for their much appreciated co-operation with the IMO staff while preparing for the Conference.

This is the **second** Diplomatic Conference IMO convenes **in the Far East** in as many years, following the one we convened in Hong Kong, China, in May of 2009. It comes as a clear recognition of the leadership role the region is increasingly assuming in shipbuilding, shipowning and ship recycling, as well as providing a significant source of trained manpower for the technologically advanced ships of today. This, together with Asia’s expanding contribution to international trade and its growing role on the world economic stage, makes the Conference all the more important.

It is also appropriate that this Conference is held in 2010, which is the IMO-designated “**Year of the Seafarer**”. The successful outcome of our week-long deliberations will, therefore, send the right message to seafarers that we keep them constantly in our minds and **do care** for them by, among other actions, ensuring that the treaty instruments the Conference has been convened to revise (namely, the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers and its associated Code) continue to respond satisfactorily to changing conditions and circumstances affecting their professional life – today and in the foreseeable future.

By following, and paying due attention to, evolving trends, challenges and demands faced by those working at the sharp end of the industry, we, at IMO and in the maritime industry at large, can assure them that regulators **do understand** the nature of seafaring and the pressures that come with the profession and that we approach our standard-setting task with a genuine sympathy for the work seafarers do daily, often confronting unique physical and other hazards, some largely unknown until recently (such as unwarranted detention when their ships are involved in accidents, denial of shore leave for security purposes, abandonment in ports far away from their home countries and, in particular, pirate attacks – nowadays, a priority concern for the Organization and one which forms part of the STCW revision before this Conference). It was, therefore, with this latter concern in mind that I was extremely pleased with the unanimous decision of the IMO Council, at its last session two weeks ago, that “**Piracy: orchestrating the response**” should be **next year’s World Maritime Day theme** and I very much hope that the selection of this theme will assist both IMO and the wider maritime community in their ongoing efforts to draw the world’s attention to the modern scourge of piracy and armed robbery against

ships and, in particular, to the unacceptable dangers these unlawful acts pose to seafarers, the post-release traumas they are left with and the agony they cause to the families of those taken hostage for ransom – and to join forces to stem them.

And now onto the business in hand. It has been more than thirty years since the convention this Conference has met to comprehensively revise was adopted in 1978. At the time, it marked a significant milestone in IMO's history as the STCW Convention (as the treaty instrument came to be known and referred to in its abbreviated form) was the first ever to deal with the **human element**. It did so by setting uniform, global standards for maritime training, certification and watchkeeping applicable to **seafarers from all over the world**.

The first version of the Convention served its purpose and the industry well for more than 15 years, during which important developments happened in shipping and in the area it aimed at regulating, including the establishment by IMO, in 1983 and 1988, respectively, of two high-level training institutions: the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden and the International Maritime Law Institute in Valetta, Malta.

In the light, however, of significant changes in the shipping industry since the Convention came into force in 1984, it became apparent, by the mid-1990s, that, were it to serve its purpose successfully, there was an urgent need for a complete overhaul of its requirements. This was achieved by an International Conference, which IMO convened in 1995, resulting in an extensive array of amendments, including the emergence of the STCW Code. The requirements then introduced laid down standards of **competence** to ensure that seafarers, **in addition to** possessing the required knowledge, also have the appropriate **skills** to carry out their assigned duties on board ship. But probably the most important innovation of the 1995 amendments was the introduction of an **oversight** role empowering IMO to assess and validate that Parties to the Convention are indeed giving “**full and complete effect**” to its requirements. This novelty, which introduced the so-called “**White list**”, was done not only to ensure that the Convention is implemented in the right spirit, but also in order to enable countries to recognize and endorse each other's certificates. Furthermore, the amendments adopted in 1995 required that all training, assessment of competence, certification, endorsement and revalidation activities are, since, continuously monitored through a **quality assurance** system designed to achieve the defined objectives of the Convention – that is, **competent seafarers for all ranks on all ships**.

It is this same focus on quality, together with the need to adapt the regulatory regime to relentless technological advances and the latest generation of ships, which has driven the comprehensive review process initiated in 2006 and the results of which are presented to this Conference for adoption. The review was carried out taking account of a set of **basic principles** agreed by the Organization's Maritime Safety Committee, ably chaired by a distinguished son of the Philippines, Mr. Neil Ferrer. These were:

- to retain the structure and goals of the 1995 revision;
- to ensure that existing standards are not scaled down;
- to retain unaltered the articles of the Convention;
- to address inconsistencies, interpretations and outdated provisions, along with clarifications of certain provisions agreed to by the Maritime Safety Committee;

- to cover technological advances;
- to address requirements for effective communication;
- to provide, in the interests of innovation in technology, flexibility in terms of compliance and for required levels of training and certification and watchkeeping arrangements;
- to include provisions addressing the special characteristics and circumstances of short sea shipping and the offshore industry; and
- to address security-related issues.

The comprehensive set of proposed amendments before you, distinguished delegates, covers a wide range of training, certification and watchkeeping matters. Among these, I will mention, in particular, standards of competence for personnel on board various types of **tankers**; training requirements for **electro-technical officers** and **able seafarers**; harmonization of **hours of rest** with the requirements of the 2006 ILO Maritime Labour Convention, to reduce fatigue and ensure fitness for duty; **training in ECDIS**; **maritime security**; **piracy and armed robbery against ships**; prevention of **alcohol and drug abuse on board ships**; **leadership and teamwork training**; **marine environmental awareness training** for all seafarers; and innovative training methodologies, including **e-learning**.

Although the STW Sub-Committee achieved general agreement on most of the items covered in the about-to-be-revised instruments, there are still a few issues of substance **awaiting final decision** by the Conference. Among those, I would mention, in particular:

- the **table of physical abilities**; and
- the **exemption clause** relating to hours of work.

I hope that the complexity of issues such as these will not impede the Conference in making, in all respects, decisions by **consensus** and, to such an end, I encourage you all to work **together** to ensure the most successful possible outcome. I trust that the officers you will elect to lead the Conference will direct you to do just that.

Distinguished delegates,

As our societies expand and develop in an increasingly interdependent, globalized world, it becomes inevitable that standards developed to regulate human activity and performance should be aligned across national borders and among different regions of the world. This applies particularly to shipping, given its exceptionally international character. While going about our business this week, we should keep uppermost in our mind that society increasingly expects **concrete, effective and lasting** action to both safeguard and enhance public safety and security and the protection of the environment – “imperatives” that are also part of 21st century principles of **good corporate governance** and **social responsibility**. We should respond to those expectations and duties comprehensively and satisfactorily and, in doing so, assume our duty to seafarers by providing them with training standards of a quality commensurate with their role as both a professional and high-value asset. In this way, we will also send an unequivocal message to potential recruits that here is an industry that takes education and career development seriously – a message that is also central to this year’s World Maritime Day theme.

Our aim for this week, then, is to work on and eventually adopt the comprehensive set of proposed amendments to the STCW Convention and Code, guided by **pragmatism** and a **readiness to compromise** in the renowned **IMO spirit of co-operation**. I believe that the draft texts before you have all the ingredients required to strike the right balance among possibly differing views and, therefore, I call on all of you to demonstrate due political will and the required sense of purpose that will enable the Conference to reach **consensus** decisions in all respects.

In going about achieving this, I suggest that you are guided by **two principal objectives**:

- **first**, that the comprehensive amendments to the STCW Convention you will negotiate this week are drafted in a clear and unambiguous manner, so that seafarers from all over the world have a clear understanding of what they should do and what is expected of them; and
- **two**, that the STCW regime, which will emerge from this Conference, sets standards for the seafaring profession such as to respond satisfactorily to modern societal expectations, including those that have environmental connotations.

If successful in the pursuit of these two objectives, you will be able, at the end of the day, to claim that, through the introduction of novel provisions (ranging from updated deck department and engineering training that embraces emerging and modern respective concepts to the most advanced training methodologies available in this age of cyberspace), you have provided good services to the causes of safety, security and environmental protection and thus benefited shipping, international trade and the world economy in no small measure.

I am extremely pleased that training ships from China, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation have sailed to Manila Harbour. Their presence here adds a special colour to the Conference and I hope that as many delegates and observers as possible will find time to visit them and spend some time with the students. I will certainly visit all of them, as, doing so, will give me a unique opportunity to meet and congratulate the cadets for their choice to join the maritime profession and to encourage them to stay in the service of shipping following their graduation. I consider the opportunity the Conference provides and the arrival of the training ships in Manila as a very fitting component among the various activities to mark the **Year of the Seafarer**.

Distinguished delegates,

I am confident that the maritime training and certification regime we aspire to put in place through this Conference will promote substantially the objectives of both the STCW Convention and IMO. I know I can count on you all in this extremely significant undertaking and hope that, once the proposed amendments have been adopted and upon their subsequent entry into force, Governments and industry alike will work together to ensure their wide and effective implementation. To such an end, and as part of our activities relating to the **Year of the Seafarer**, we have developed a **technical co-operation programme** containing a series of ten regional seminars to be conducted globally during the second half of this year and throughout 2011 in order to give Parties to the 1978 STCW Convention an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the revised requirements and to receive useful technical advice that will enable them to implement them and the Convention and Code as a whole effectively.

And with this, all that remains for me to do now is to wish you all, distinguished delegates and observers, every success as you are about to embark on your ambitious venture this week. However, before concluding, I wish to pay a special **tribute** to the **STW Sub-Committee** and its **Chairman, Admiral Peter Brady of Jamaica**, for their dedicated work to bring the whole process to the point whereby a Conference could be convened with credible chances of success. The fact that we now have authoritative draft texts on which to focus this week in the pursuit of our set objective is owed to the collective and persistent efforts of the Sub-Committee, skillfully led by Admiral Brady under the wise direction of the MSC.

I would like to **close** my speech by reiterating our sincere gratitude to the Philippines for their generosity in hosting this Diplomatic Conference and for all the courtesies extended and facilities made available, while, at the same time, ensuring that our stay in this beautiful and lively City is enjoyable. And, once again, to thank you, Mr. Vice-President, and your colleagues in the Cabinet, for honouring us with your presence here today.

It now gives me great pleasure to **declare this Conference of Parties to the 1978 STCW Convention open**. I wish you all, and the Conference, every success and good luck.

Thank you.
