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**Keynote Speech II**

**Maritime Training and Education Priorities in a Globalised Industry**

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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed an honour to be with you today at the European Maritime Education and Training Conference which will address among other issues, what I believe will become the biggest challenge that the shipping industry and all those connected with it will face over the coming years and speak to you today on the topic of “Maritime Training and Education Priorities in a Globalised Industry”.

**Introduction**

IMO has given priority to training of seafarers through the adoption in 1978 of the STCW Convention, the amendment in 1995 of the original Convention with the introduction of a Code in two parts, and subsequent amendments by means of various IMO circulars. Failure to instil the importance of achieving the required standards of training and certification in ship operators and seafarers will inevitably hamper not only implementation of regulations but the quality and competence of seafarers.

Seafarers today have to face a number of issues related to: smaller crews from different nationalities; short, rapid turnaround in ports that modern technology and cargo handling techniques allow; the pressures of charterers; more recently, the necessary pressures of shipboard and port facility security matters; multiple inspections in ports and the loneliness and increased isolation that has always been a part of the profession. Seafaring is an occupation that is no less dangerous and challenging than it ever was but even more demanding.

It is no exaggeration to say that manning, training and all the other aspects of the human element in shipping are central to many of the issues which now face our industry. Safety, security, shipping’s environmental credentials and, indeed, the whole future sustainability of the

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and may not reflect the views of the Organization or its Secretariat.

industry are all dependent to a great extent on the employment and retention of well-trained and qualified, competent human resources on board.

Apart from work on developing measures to improve the hardware of shipping - the ships, their design, construction and equipment, their survey, certification and maintenance processes- IMO has addressed human element issues primarily through the 1978 Convention on training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers. But, more recently, in looking at how improvements in the performance of shipping can best be achieved, IMO has taken the conscious decision to concentrate its efforts much more strongly on the human element, and this “shifting the emphasis onto people” has become enshrined as one of the Organization’s guiding principles in the new Millennium.

In 1997, looking at new challenges ahead, IMO adopted an Assembly resolution A.850 (20) setting out the Organization’s vision, principles and goals for the human element which was amended in 2004 (A.947(23)) to include matters related to security. It was founded on the desire to enhance significantly maritime safety, security and the quality of the marine environment. It sought to improve the performance of the human element in shipping, recognizing that the human element is a complex multi-dimensional issue that involves the entire spectrum of human activities performed by ships’ crews, shore-based management, regulatory bodies, recognized organizations, shipyards, legislators and other relevant parties, all of whom need to co-operate to address human element issues effectively.

The resolution established among other principles that, when developing regulations, the Organization should honour the seafarer by seeking and respecting the opinions of those who actually do the work at sea. It is also recognized that effective remedial action following maritime casualties requires a sound understanding of the human element involvement in accidents, something which is gained only through thorough investigation and systematic analysis of casualties for contributory factors and the causal chain of events.

The resolution also states that rules and regulations addressing seafarers directly should be simple, clear and comprehensive. It recognizes: that crew performance is a function of individual capabilities, management policies, cultural factors, experience, training, job skills, work environment and countless other factors; and the importance of effective communication which is essential to sound management and good operational decisions. Overall, the conclusion was that consideration of human element matters should aim at decreasing the possibility of human error as far as possible.

One of the goals of the resolution is to promote and communicate, through human element principles, a maritime safety culture and heightened marine environment awareness. A safety culture gives appropriate priority to the management of safety and is more than merely avoiding accidents or even reducing the number of accidents. Improved statistics of accidents or casualty incidents may be an apparent benchmark of a successful safety culture. However, the key to achieving a safety culture lies in recognizing that accidents are preventable by following correct procedures and established best practice, constantly thinking “safety” and seeking continuous improvement. The concept of a safety culture must take root not only in seafarers but also in management ashore and among training providers.

Many accidents that continue to occur are quite often due to unsafe practices by seafarers, and those who violate good practices or established rules are often well aware of the errors of their ways, and, can readily avoid such practices. Most will have received training aimed at preventing them but, through a culture that is tolerant to the ‘calculated risk’, they still occur.

The challenge, for trainers and training establishments, and managers ashore and afloat, to minimize these unsafe practices, is to impart not only professional skills but also instil the attitudes necessary to ensure that safety objectives are met. The aim should be to inspire seafarers towards firm and effective self-regulation and to encourage personal ownership of established “best practice”. To this end, the quality and effectiveness of training will play a quite significant part in determining the attitude of, and competence demonstrated by, seafarers to their work., which, in turn, will be shaped to a large degree by the ‘culture’ of the shipping company.

### **Comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code**

One of the key aspects in IMO’s work to address the human element at sea was the adoption in 1978 of an international convention on seafarer training standards – the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978 (STCW 78). In 1995, IMO revised and updated that Convention bearing in mind the importance of the human element in managing safety ashore and afloat and taking into account the demands of, and changes in, the industry. The priority placed by IMO, however, on the importance of seafarers training and certification and the global application of uniform standards is displayed by the comprehensive review of the STCW Convention undertaken at the thirty-ninth session of the Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping of Seafarers (STW 39) in January this year, to resolve inconsistencies and to ensure that it meets the new challenges facing the shipping industry today and in the years to come.

The Maritime Safety Committee approved a list of areas within the STCW Convention and Code identified for a comprehensive review by the Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping (STW) covering a wide range of issues. Some of the basic principles for this review retains the structure and goals of the 1995 revision; ensures that existing standards are not down scaled; the articles of the Convention will not be amended; addresses inconsistencies, interpretations, outdated provisions, MSC instructions, any clarifications already issued and takes account of technological advances; addresses requirements for effective communication; provides flexibility for required levels of training, certification and watchkeeping arrangements, due to innovation in technology; addresses the special character and circumstances of short sea shipping and the offshore industry; and security-related issues.

I would like to highlight a few key issues which have a direct bearing on the quality of training and competence of seafarers in the future that have been identified and given priority by IMO to be addressed within the comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code.

## **Leadership**

Leadership is a much misunderstood word on board ships but has gained greater importance significantly due to the shortage of senior officers. There is an expectation that it is the master who must lead his team to ensure that officers and crew operate the ship in a safe and seamanlike manner and apply best practices at all times.

Demonstration of, and training in, leadership need not, however, be applied only to the master or chief engineer. Anyone on board a ship may be called upon to display skills of a leader in certain situations such as fire-fighting, crisis management and bridge team management - but few of these overtly explore the underlying principles of leadership. This is a gap that must be filled to improve the safety and efficiency of operation of ships.

Effective leadership training should be an essential element in a modern seafarers' training curriculum, as the value of ships, the environment in which they operate, the risk/reward ratios, and the expectations of the world community, among other issues, places ever greater demands on the responsibilities of owners, and the skills of managers and seafarers. Therefore, the shipping industry must focus on the qualities of leadership which it needs to promote among seafarers and adequately address this training. Such training must also be applied equally to shore-based staff.

## **Communication**

Multi-national crews have added a different dimension to the safe operation of ships and management of safety on board primarily due to the need for multi-lingual communication on board. On ships to which chapter 1 of SOLAS Convention applies, English shall be used as the working language for bridge-to-bridge and bridge-to-shore safety communications as well as for communications between pilot and bridge watchkeeping personnel, unless those directly involved in the communication speak a common language other than English. Although, the English language is considered to be the language of communication on board, practically, this is not necessarily the case. IMO has addressed effective communication to a limited extent through the publication of the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases. However, this is limited to the exchange of technical terminology between ships to assure safety of navigation. The focus is now on a holistic view of effective communication covering all aspects of shipboard communications with a view to promoting a safety culture.

## **Fatigue**

A recent Life at Sea survey in 2007 on Attraction and Retention of Seafarers report shows that fatigue ranked fourth among the seventeen worst aspects at sea. Fatigue on board ships exists, leads to accidents and incidents and, if left unchecked, will create an environment where the retention of qualified crews will be increasingly difficult. IMO has disseminated guidance by means of an IMO circular on fatigue management and mitigation. IMO and ILO have published guidance on hours of work and hours rest. Due to a culture of a 'can do' attitude of seafarers, it is difficult to gauge the extent of the problems caused by fatigue because work/rest hour logs do not reflect a problem. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that fatigue and manning levels are of major concern to seafarers and this is another aspect, together with manning levels, being closely looked at during the comprehensive review. Everyone associated with shipping should be gravely concerned about fatigue and its consequences, and join together to raise awareness of fatigue on board and promote best practices for its effective management and mitigation.

## **Manpower shortage**

It is an accepted fact that, more than 90% of international world trade is today carried by ships, which are manned and operated by seafarers. The number of newbuildings and types of ships continues to grow. However the supply of seafarers in sufficient numbers continues to cause concern, in particular when set against the unprecedented rise in orders for new buildings. The BIMCO/ISF manpower study of 2005 estimated a shortfall of 10,000 officers or a 2% of the total workforce and projected this shortfall to increase to 27,000 or about 6% of the total

workforce. The study may not have taken into account the recent unprecedented rise in orders for new buildings, notably LNG carriers. This shortage is exacerbated by the apparent reluctance of young people to join the ranks, those at sea to take on higher responsibilities or, even more importantly, to remain in service. This coupled with recent unhelpful legislation and practices which have the potential to discourage them to serve at sea, continues to be a challenge for all of us.

## **Seafarer supply**

Today, the supply of seagoing manpower has become a major revenue earner for some countries making them global powers in the supply chain. Well-trained seafarers become renowned all over the world for their skills, their knowledge, their integrity and their reliability – in short, their quality and professionalism – and will be in great demand across the shipping industry in positions of great responsibility throughout the world fleet. However, the rapid pace of change in the industry should not prove to be a disincentive to prospective seafarers. The industry needs to provide attractive incentives, not necessarily financial only, to retain those who are already employed in the industry. Training programmes should take note of changes in technology and innovation and address these in seafarers' training programmes in order to prepare the incumbents and aspirants alike to continue in the industry.

## **Conclusion**

Seafaring is demanding and sometimes quite dangerous work, and the hours are long, still most seafarers have spent long years at sea. This says that not all is bad in the industry. However, complacency and an attitude of taking seafarers for granted might have been contributory causes, among a multitude of others, that have led to the current shortage of supply. Ignoring the root causes can only magnify the problems and exacerbate a situation that is already quite severe. This could only enhance the proliferation of poor quality seafarers, which is contrary to the need of the industry.

In today's world, a seafarer might be regarded primarily either as an asset or as an operating cost; it depends largely on the shipowner's point of view. But those at the quality end of the market will clearly put emphasis on the benefits to be gained from employing well-trained, educated and certificated seafarers who can demonstrate competence and undertake responsibility to manage today's increasingly sophisticated ships efficiently, securely and safely. They are the nucleus of a vibrant and dynamic industry the world could not do without and, effective need-based training is at the core of the quality seafarers that the industry desires.

There is no doubt that significant changes will be made to the STCW Convention and Code that will enhance the existing standards, and these changes can only be for the better for seafarers and an even greater challenge for the trainer. It is worth highlighting that all the efforts related to training and qualifications should be geared towards establishing a safety culture, the cornerstone of effective safety management and safe operation of ships. It is important that it is introduced both onboard and ashore so that it is embedded in: the ethos of seafarers; the culture and operational principles of a company; and the manner in which a seafarer responds to the demands of the job and abides by company policy.

STW 39 has prepared the preliminary draft text of proposed amendments relating to the STCW Convention and the Code. These preliminary drafts will be discussed further at an intersessional meeting, from 8 to 12 September this year, after which STW 40 in February next year will further consider the outcome of this intersessional meeting with a view to finalizing the draft text at STW 41 in 2010. IMO is confident that the target for completing the review and preparing the associated amendments to the STCW Convention and Code by 2010 would be achieved.

In conclusion, effective training is crucial in maintaining the quality and fitness for purpose of seafarers and should be the responsibility not only of seafarers but all stakeholders in the industry. An effective, updated, competence-based training and assessment system, complemented by ship-based in-service training, and re-training and refresher programmes, where necessary, will ensure that seafarers globally would be able to fully support the IMO mission statement of ‘safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans’.

It has been an honour to be with you today, and I wish you all, Ladies and Gentlemen, every success for what promises to be a thought-provoking and lively conference.

Thank you.

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