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World Maritime University agreement signed

Anonymous

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An agreement concerning the establishment of the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden, has been signed by the Secretary-General, Mr. C. P. Srivastava, and the Swedish Ambassador in London, His Excellency Mr. Leif Leifland.

The Agreement defines the legal status of the University as an international institution under the International Maritime Organization possessing necessary attributes to function with the requisite degree of independence.

The aim of the University, which is scheduled to commence operation on 4 July this year, is to provide top-level training for personnel from developing countries in senior positions in maritime administrations, maritime training institutions, shipping companies and other key sectors. It has long been recognized that the shortage of suitably trained personnel at very senior levels in the maritime field has been a major problem for developing countries. Although many of these countries have training facilities for more junior staff, there is no institution in the world dedicated exclusively to the training of personnel in senior management positions.

The idea of establishing a university to help fill this gap was first publicly discussed in 1980 at a seminar organized by IMO in Malmö. The following year the IMO Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution requesting the Secretary-General to take all further action necessary for the establishment of the University.

Since then plans for the World Maritime University project have developed swiftly. It will be housed in the facilities formerly used by the Malmö Merchant Marine Academy. The Malmö municipal authorities for their part have made available an apartment block in the centre of the town for use as living accommodation.

It is expected that the University will provide tuition for approximately 100 students in its first year. The courses offered will normally last for two years and will deal with general maritime administration; maritime safety administration; maritime education; and technical management of shipping companies. Shorter courses will be offered in a number of other subjects.

Mr. Srivastava said when the Agreement was signed: 'Sweden has always been one of the strongest supporters of the International Maritime Organization, and its generosity in providing funds and facilities for the World Maritime University is a magnificent gesture. The University will in the years to come prove to be of immense benefit to the whole maritime community.'

IMO to hold seminar on fresh water ballast

An idea which could supply desert countries with fresh water and at the same time provide more work for the world's hard-hit tanker fleet is to be discussed at a two-day seminar at IMO headquarters.

The plan is to use oil tankers to carry supplies of fresh water to the oil-exporting countries, many of which are in arid regions with severe water shortages.

The seminar will be held on 31 May – 1 June. It is being organized jointly by IMO and the National Academy for Scientific Research of Libya. The seminar is free of charge and is open to representatives from governments, institutions, oil and shipping industries and others interested in the subject.

The idea of carrying fresh water in oil tankers is not a new one, but until recently technical and financial difficulties have prevented it from becoming a reality.

At present tankers returning from the port of discharge to the loading terminal fill some of their tanks with sea-water to act as ballast. When the loading terminal is reached this is pumped out and fresh oil taken on board. If fresh water were used for ballasting, it has been argued, it could be pumped ashore and used for either agricultural or industrial purposes.

The idea is all the more attractive because most of the world's oil-rich countries, such as those in the Middle East, are very short of water, while most of the large oil consumers have good suplies.

However, progress in developing the idea was slow for various reasons. The fresh water carried in oil tanks of tankers would still have to be treated before use because it would be contaminated by oil residues left in the ship's tanks. This could be costly. The capital investment in pipelines and other facilities could also be very high. And when the tanker market was buoyant there was some doubt as to whether the profits made by transporting water would outweigh the extra time and costs involved.

In recent years the position has changes. One reason is that in October this year the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 (MARPOL 73/78) will become international law.

This instrument, which was adopted under the auspices of IMO, will introduce stricter requirements for tankers. Tankers ordered after 1 June 1979 will be obliged to be fitted with segregated ballast tanks: this means that some tanks on board will be reserved exclusively for the carriage of ballast water. Since there will be no mixture with oil there will be no contamination problem. Other requirements will ensure that even on existing ships the oil content of ballast water will be significantly reduced – and the problem of purifying the water, which has inhibited development of the fresh water ballast idea in the past, will have been reduced.

The economic position has also altered. The slump in energy demand has resulted in many tankers being laid up for lack of work. Owners are therefore anxiously looking for ways of making their ships pay and fresh water ballast offers such a possibility.

Since 1978 IMO has carried out two studies on behalf of the Arab Development Institute of Libya. Other research has been carried out by Intertanko, the independent tanker owners' organization and Mitsui and Co. of Japan. All of the studies have shown that the fresh water ballast idea is becoming more and more viable. It also has the added advantage of offering considerable environmental benefits by reducing operational oil pollution of the sea. This is of particular concern to IMO whose primary objectives are the improvement of safety at sea and the elimination of marine pollution.

The seminar will deal with both the environmental and the practical aspects of fresh water ballast. A team of experts from all round the world has been selected to deliver papers on the subject and among the points which will be discussed are:

- The contribution of FWB to the reduction of oil pollution
- The use of FWB in agriculture
- Economic analysis of the FWB scheme
- Comparison of FWB with desalination
- Feasibility studies of the carriage of FWB
- The impact of FWB on tanker operations and future design.

Data links ease translation problems

One of the problems facing any international organization is the need to translate documents into many different languages. For an organization like IMO, whose work involves the development of complex legal and technical standards, the problem is even greater since the different texts published must be precise in all languages.

If languages were static there would be little difficulty, but they are probably changing more today than at any other time, especially in technical areas.

This presents considerable difficulties to IMO which has to translate documents into a number of languages. The problem is particularly acute with regard to English, French and Spanish, the Organization's three working languages.

IMO has been considering ways of overcoming the difficulties for some time and two years ago established a link with the terminology bank of the European Communities Commission, which is located in Luxembourg. This bank – which goes under the name of Eurodicantom – contains more than 350,000 entries, in all Community languages, together with some Spanish. IMO's French and Spanish translation sections both have terminals linked to Eurodicantom.

Now a new link has been established – with the Canadian Government Terminology Bank in Ottawa.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Saulnier, senior reviser in the French translation section, who has been in charge of the project since its inception, says: 'The first link with Luxembourg was very encouraging and when we learned that the Canadian Government also has a terminology data bank we looked into the possibility of establishing links with them as well.'

The Canadian bank contains more than 800,000 entries in French and English and is updated at the rate of 1,500 to 2,000 a week. In March the new link-up was officially inaugurated when the Secretary-General, Mr. C. P. Srivastava, sent the first query to the Ottawa data centre. IMO thereby became the first organization in the United Nations system

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The Secretary-General, Mr. C. P. Srivastava, watches as Mr. Jean-Pierre Saulnier, senior reviser in the French translation section, transmits a query to the Canadian Government Terminology Bank.