

3-16-1983

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Recommended Citation

Porter, Janet, "UN marine agency embarks on new course" (1983). *WMU in the News*. 131.
http://commons.wmu.se/wmu_news/131

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UN Marine Agency Embarks on New Course

By JANET PORTER
Journal of Commerce Staff

LONDON — The only United Nations agency to be headquartered in Britain, the International Maritime Organization, celebrates its 25th anniversary Thursday confident that it has made enormous strides in its twin aims of promoting safety at sea and preventing marine pollution.

Nearly every country in the world with an interest in maritime affairs is now a member of the IMO, representing 99.1 percent of world tonnage.

There are more than 70,000 ships of some 400 million gross registered tons engaged in world maritime trade, according to IMO Secretary-General Chandrikas Srivastava, and the central responsibility of the organization is to develop global technical standards for the world's fleets.

During its 25 years of operation, the IMO has drawn up 27 treaties covering almost every aspect of maritime safety and pollution of the seas, of which 20 have so far been ratified and are now in force or have met the conditions for entry into force — one of the best records of a U.N. agency.

Mr. Srivastava now sees the IMO's emphasis shifting somewhat as the organization concentrates on implementing the conventions through the provision of technical assistance and advice, particularly to developing countries which are now trying to build up their shipping fleets.

As the IMO moves into a new phase of its operations, it is also moving into magnificent new headquarters in London from its rather cramped home in Piccadilly. The new

building on London's Albert Embankment, overlooking the River Thames and the houses of Parliament, was handed over by the British government to the IMO last November and will be officially opened by the queen in May.



QUEEN ELIZABETH II

The IMO's new headquarters in London will be opened by the British queen in May.

UK REPORT

The £46 million (\$70 million) building includes a conference hall able to seat 650 delegates and offers simultaneous translation facilities in 12 languages. In addition, the IMO headquarters has another four committee rooms, library facilities, reception lobbies and office space to accommodate up to 600 staff.

The building is decorated with gifts from most of the IMO's 122 member states, including the IMO emblem on the facade donated by the United States and the flagpole at the front entrance given by the U.S. Coast Guard. The property is leased to the IMO by the British government and has diplomatic immunity.

In most instances, conventions drawn up by the IMO come into force when at least 25 states covering a minimum of 50 percent of world tonnage accept the resolutions. Once the required number of states have ratified an IMO convention and it comes into force, it is the responsibility of the sovereign governments to enforce the agreements.

But the IMO (formerly the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization) recognizes that developed nations, with their greater experience and expertise, are usually able to meet the new standards and regulations more quickly than the less developed countries who may need help in, for example, implementing technical requirements.

In view of this, the IMO is establishing the World Maritime Uni-

versity in Malmo, Sweden, which is due to open in July of this year.

The aim of the university will be to provide top-level training for personnel from developing countries in senior positions in maritime administration, maritime training, shipping companies and other key sectors, since it has long been recognized that the shortage of suitably qualified people in key positions has been a major problem for Third World nations.

The university is expected to provide tuition for approximately 100 students in its first year. The courses offered will usually last for two years and will deal with general maritime administration, maritime safety, maritime education and technical management of shipping companies.

Enforcement of IMO standards and regulations is made easier by the international nature of the shipping industry. In the case of a country refusing to conform and meet safety or anti-pollution requirements, another state might take action when the substandard vessel called at one its ports.

But there is very little evidence of member states deliberately not conforming, says Mr. Srivastava, and non-compliance with IMO protocols is usually the result of lack of expertise and know-how.

Now one of the prime objectives of the organization in the 1980s is "the promotion of the implementation of the international standards and regulations for the improvement of maritime safety and for the prevention and control of marine pollution from ships," the IMO says.

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