

7-4-1983

IMO bids to bridge safety gaps

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Recommended Citation

Anonymous, "IMO bids to bridge safety gaps" (1983). *WMU in the News*. 150.
http://commons.wmu.se/wmu_news/150

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IMO bids to bridge s

MANY of the developing shipping nations are members of IMO, and the decisions taken within that body have a profound impact on the way in which their ships are equipped, crewed and operated.

Yet, while ships become more complex and the body of IMO rules and requirements grow apace, little has been done to bridge a major gap in parallel efforts to improve maritime safety — the training of key senior personnel from Third World countries.

It is for this fundamental reason that the concept emerged of a "World Maritime University," operated under the auspices of IMO.

Mr Srivastava has warned that there is a "most acute shortage" of well-trained, highly qualified maritime personnel in the developing countries. He said that this has resulted in "both a weakening of the links of those countries with the world system of commerce and transport and an excessive dependence on imported expertise at very high cost."

Mr Srivastava added: "Not only the developing countries will benefit from the special training at the university. The whole world system of maritime transport will be operated with greater effectiveness and safety and this will result in clear and substantial value for all."

Certainly the plan for a World Maritime University (WMU) fitted in well with IMO's declared aim to lay more emphasis on the human element in its drive to improve maritime safety. For example, it complements the entry into force in April next year of the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping. The WMU will provide a nucleus of well trained experts, while the 1978 Convention should do much to raise minimum crew standards worldwide.

The WMU is concerned with better access to advanced maritime technology and greater self-reliance for the developing countries. IMO has already made much progress — under its technical assistance programmes — in supporting the maritime training institutions of developing countries. Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil and Nigeria are among the many nations that have benefited from IMO technical assistance in the field of training. The agency has also helped the regional training institutions, such as the Academy of Maritime Sciences and Technol-

ogy of the Sea, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and the Regional Maritime Academy, Accra, Ghana.

However, the WMU will provide a critical element that is missing: a centre for advanced study for high-level, specialised personnel of the developing countries — including maritime teachers, surveyors, inspectors, technical managers and maritime administrators.

The city of Malmö has placed all the facilities of its former Merchant Marine Academy at the disposal of IMO, so guaranteeing a healthy start in life for the WMU.

The university will have a full-time academic staff of experienced professors, supported by visiting professors and lecturers working in a variety of specialised fields.

The students will be selected from the ranks of senior maritime personnel of the developing countries. High standards of qualification for entry have been set, to ensure that the students benefit to the full from the advanced-level studies offered.

The need for advanced training of key personnel has been generated by many factors: the increasing complexity of world shipping, the ever-growing involvement of developing countries in the industry, and the accelerating reliance of shipping companies on foreign crews from the low-cost Third World nations.

While IMO is nearing completion of its "family" of international conventions, to improve safety and reduce pollution incidents, the acute shortage of maritime expertise in the developing countries has been a source of constant concern. Meanwhile, many of the developing countries have rapidly expanded their merchant marines. Third World countries now possess around 50 million tons gross, including examples of the most advanced vessel types.

Many of the training establishments of these nations suffer from a lack of qualified teachers. In many cases, their facilities need up-grading, and more advanced training needs to be offered.

Developing countries have also been hampered by their lack of highly qualified maritime administrators and senior technical advisers, in areas such as navigation, engineering, and naval architecture.

Maritime specialists and technical personnel from Third World countries have only limited access to the advanced training facilities

THE first students have begun their studies at the World Maritime University at the former Malmö Merchant Marine Academy in Sweden. Realisation of a project to create an international centre of excellence in advanced maritime studies has long been an ambition of Mr C. P. Srivastava, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). With the help of the Swedish government, the municipality of Malmö, the UNDP and many other organisations and individuals, Mr Srivastava and IMO have succeeded in their aim. Robert Thomas reports.

tain IMO conventions require that key personnel should receive special training, short courses for this purpose are not normally given in developing countries. Inevitably, these men must attempt to win one of the few places available elsewhere.

Essentially, IMO now hopes that the WMU will provide an answer to the question: Where are these countries going to find the marine inspectors, surveyors, examiners and technical administrators so badly needed to implement the new global standards for safe operation? Certainly, without such an establishment, it is difficult to see how the Third World could observe

practiced at many other locations within that country and elsewhere in Europe.

The support of Swedish organisations has been a prominent factor from the first in the evolution of a WMU. In November 1980, the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), a long-established supporter of IMO activities, funded a seminar at Malmö on the subject of global standards of maritime training.

The groundwork done in preparation for this meeting centred on informal talks between IMO and the Swedish government on the possibility of stepping up Swedish aid to the IMO technical assistant



Professor Sölve Arvedson, Rector of the World Maritime University, outside the main building.

the demanding rules of Marpol, Solas, STCW and the other major conventions.

A base for the university at Malmö looked a very attractive proposition to the planners of the WMU project. The existing facilities of the Malmö academy are described as "excellent," while Sweden — as a highly-developed shipping nation — offers many opportunities to expose students to

programme in the area of maritime training.

Seven of the developed countries attended the seminar and exchanged views with delegations representing a total of 45 Third World nations. This meeting was told that IMO and the Swedish government had reached an understanding on the establishment of an international maritime university. The university plan went on to

safety gaps

IMO Maritime Safety Committee, Marine Environment Protection Committee, Council and Assembly.

The 1981 assembly gave its backing in the adoption of Resolution A501. This authorised Secretary General Srivastava to seek high-priority financial support for the university from the UNDP.

Sweden had already extended generous aid. Following the assembly decision, Mr Srivastava held fresh talks with the Swedish minister of transport and with officials representing the city of Malmö. As a result, both the government and the city authorities decided to step up their initial offers of help.

The Swedish government pledged a contribution of \$1 million a year to the university's annual running costs of around \$3.6m, with the proviso that this be matched by a similar level of financial support from UNDP.

In addition, in February of last year, the chairman of the Financial Board of the City Government of Malmö presented the IMO secretary general with a formal document setting out a commitment to the establishment of the university — in making the buildings and facilities of the Merchant Marine Academy available, together with housing, sport and leisure facilities for students.

However, IMO had still to secure a high level of funding from the UNDP. Accordingly, Mr Srivastava addressed the governing council of UNDP in Geneva during the summer of last year. Once again, the WMU plan received widespread support from developed and developing countries alike.

The UNDP meeting adopted a resolution calling for future talks between IMO and the Swedish government, to clarify the technical and financial issues which would determine the level of UNDP involvement in the maritime university project.

These talks included a special meeting last August between Mr Srivastava and the UNDP administrator, at UNDP's New York headquarters.

The discussions, described as "fruitful and encouraging," yielded an initial UNDP commitment to the plan. An agreement

this year for the opening of the university.

The money was to support the project through to June this year, funding the preparation of detailed syllabi for the various courses, establishment of contacts with visiting professors, and the preliminary approach to developing countries regarding selection of candidates for courses.

Mr Srivastava then had to reopen talks with the Swedish authorities, as their promise of \$1m a year towards WMU operating costs was dependent on a similar sum forthcoming from UNDP. He had to secure Swedish endorsement of a proposal that the annual balance requirement of \$2.6m would be raised by the *joint* efforts of IMO and UNDP. In the event, the Swedish government readily agreed to modify its conditions for provision of aid, and the establishment of the WMU was assured.

The fund-raising then began in earnest. The IMO secretary general found himself in a position to seek long-term financial commitment from the UNDP. And, joint approaches began to be made to other potential donors.

Under the operating budget drawn up for the university, it is estimated that the cost will be \$1.5m for the second half of this year, about \$3.5m in 1984 and 1985 and some \$3.7m in 1986. This is based on the assumption that the WMU operates at full capacity from the beginning of next year. The average cost per student (based upon the number of students on an annual basis — that is, annualising the number of students attending short courses) works out at around \$26,000 for the three years 1984-86.

In order to achieve financial security, the WMU must have pledges of support which will cover the first several years of operation. The professional faculty, for example, are being hired under two-year contracts and plenty of lead time was required to allow them to disengage from their current positions. Above all, there was the need to meet the deadline of the beginning of next year for the achievement of a full complement of staff.