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Towards a widening vision

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Towards a widening vision

In a recent interview with *The Naval Architect*, Mr Chandrika Praed Srivastava, Secretary-General of the IMO, discussed both the progress of the world Maritime University and the Organization's hopes for the future.

ON 14th November 1984 Mr Chandrika Praed Srivastava was re-appointed Secretary General of IMO for a record fourth term of office beginning January 1st 1986. Mr Srivastava joined IMO after a distinguished record of public service in India and his career with the Organization has co-incided with some of IMO's most important developments, notably the opening in July 1983 of the World Maritime University at Malmo in Sweden and the entry into force of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers in April 1984.

Srivastava first became associated with maritime activities in India when he served as an officer on special duties with the Directorate General of Shipping in 1953. Following this he was appointed Senior Deputy Director General of Shipping in 1959, Managing Director of The Shipping Corporation of India in 1961 and Joint Secretary to the Prime Minister of India in 1964. In 1966 he resumed his association with The Shipping Corporation of India when he was appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors as well as Managing Director, a position in which he remained until joining IMO.

According to the convention establishing IMO the major purpose of the Organization is 'to provide machinery for co-operation among governments in the field of governmental regulations and practices relating to technical matters of all kinds affecting shipping engaged in international trade; to encourage the general adoption of the highest practicable standards in matters concerning maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and the prevention and control of marine pollution from ships....'

However, in a recent interview with *The Naval Architect*, the Secretary-General explained that whilst all IMO member states believed in the importance of implementing such technical standards as effectively as possible, some developing countries found it difficult to do so primarily because of the shortage of sufficient highly trained staff for senior posts. Whereas the traditional maritime countries have centuries of experience behind them and have relatively little difficulty in filling senior administrative and technical positions, the developing countries usually lack this tradition and in many cases have been engaged in shipping activities for only a decade or two. This lack of experienced personnel can in some cases be eased by recruiting expatriate staff but such a solution can only be regarded as short term said Mr Srivastava. In the long run, each country must be able to operate independently with its own personnel.

From the beginning, the IMO had been assisting developing countries by establishing national and regional training institutions. However it was faced with a 'Catch 22' situation, the greatest difficulty being the recruitment of trained



personnel to fill teaching posts. It became apparent that the problem could only be dealt with sufficiently on a co-ordinated and global basis hence the proposal for a World Maritime University.

The establishment of such an institution was first put forward publicly in 1980 and was adopted unanimously as a resolution in November 1981. From this point events moved swiftly with the University opened less than two years after the decision to establish it. Now in its second year the WMU has on its rolls 136 students from 59 countries and is an undoubted success.

The University is based at Malmo in Sweden and has an international faculty of eight professors in addition to a large number of visiting lecturers who give classes on specialized subjects. Practical training is an important part of the syllabus and involves a period of secondment to developing countries.

Financial support for the project has come from a variety of sources including the United Nations Development Programme, Sweden, Norway, the Commonwealth Secretariat and a number of IMO Member Governments. Developing countries are asked to provide fellowships either independently or by utilising bilateral funds. However only about half of the \$4 million budget is on a recurring basis and the University's Board of Governors is anxious to ensure that the remainder be guaranteed by building up a capital fund of \$25 million to provide sufficient investment income. Said Mr Srivastava, 'The Capital Fund needs to be built up by voluntary donations. In the circumstances of today it would not be practical to expect very large donations from individual governments, organisations or individuals, yet the achievement

of the target would not be impossible if every member of the world maritime community were to make a small donation.'

When asked if the University was not something of an extravagance bearing in mind the financial liability undertaken, Mr Srivastava was quick to reply that 'far from being an extravagance, it makes economic sense to have one institution for the world where you can concentrate rather than duplicate...'

He continued: 'The great advantage as I foresee it is that you will have training according to global standards and global ideas, imbued with the spirit of co-operation. This will promote better understanding of the need for safety and pollution prevention and will add to efficiency allround.'

On the subject of the IMO in general Mr Srivastava said that although the aims of the Organization have not changed since its inception, the vision has widened. In particular there has been a change in emphasis from the adoption of new conventions to the effective implementation of existing instruments. 'Implementation has to be improved and enhanced and we are pursuing that very vigorously right now...However we are not a super-state, we cannot enforce...Ultimately the flag state is responsible for implementation but all states have the authority and the responsibility to inspect vessels in their ports if they believe that they are in any way sub-standard. Our role is to promote and encourage...to generate the expertise and the will and to provide support.'

Throughout the interview, the Secretary-General was keen to stress that the role of the IMO is not one of isolation but interaction. The WMU for example has established a mutual co-operation agreement with a network of colleges and maritime training institutions around the world thus putting each in direct contact with the other. Between the IMO and the Classification Societies there exists a complementary relationship. 'IACS* is represented at all our meetings. We work not in isolation but in full consultation with the industry - shipowners, seafarers, classification societies, insurance people.'

Mr Srivastava is particularly proud of the spirit of unity that pervades the IMO. 'There exists a level of co-operation between the developed and the developing world which is unique in the whole of the United Nations system. We are proud of this. Our role is to bring countries together, to unite them.'

As a closing thought, does Mr Srivastava ever realistically foresee a time when there is a set of global safety standards implemented throughout the maritime world? 'Of course, such an achievement is our ultimate goal... It won't happen overnight, but the process has begun in great earnest.'

(*International Association of Classification Societies.)

THE NAVAL ARCHITECT