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Aims and Operation of World Maritime Law Institute in Malta

This article has been kindly submitted by Mr C L Bugeja of H Vassallo Ltd, Valletta, Malta.

Malta will soon be playing a leading role in helping developing countries meet their vital demand for suitably qualified experts in international maritime law.

On 13 May 1988 an agreement was signed in London by the Maltese Parliamentary Secretary for Maritime Affairs, Dr Joe Fenech, and the International Maritime Organisation Secretary General, Dr C P Srivastava, for an Institute for International Maritime Law to be set up in Malta by October.

The setting up of this Institute will fill a gap, which has long been felt by IMO, in providing developing countries with a cadre of national legal personnel who are capable of overseeing the implementation of existing law, of reviewing and evaluating developments in maritime law, and, most importantly, of preparing and incorporating international maritime law into their national legislation.

The IMO decided to set up an Institute specifically for the teaching of international maritime law in order to help developing countries "meet their vital need (for professional personnel) on a realistic and long-term basis".

The courses were envisaged to help suitably qualified legal personnel in acquiring the necessary knowledge and expertise in maritime law and developing appropriate skills in the drafting of maritime legislation.

The courses to be run in Malta will be among the first to teach maritime law on an international basis. They will consist of annual nine-month courses gathering together topics ranging from shipping and the law of the sea to marine insurance and transportation. Emphasis will be particularly laid on the training of the participants, who have to be law graduates with senior Government posts, in the drafting of maritime legislation.

Among the facilities of the Institute will be the first World International Maritime Library which will be collecting major works on the subject, making the Institute a centre for the teaching of international maritime law which will attract scholars seeking knowledge on the subject as well as the participants themselves. To this effect, seminars and other academic workshops will be held at the Institute.

The Institute's director will be an intellectual professor of international repute. It is also intended to engage visiting professors and members of the local legal profession to give lectures at the Institute.

Malta was chosen to set up this Institute because the IMO, which runs courses on maritime-related topics other than law at its World University in Sweden, wanted to spread its activities and establish contacts with developing countries.