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Mensah wants to see greater IMO-UN co-operation

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TWENTY-ONE years at IMO has left Thomas Aboagye Mensah with firm views on the direction in which the organisation should be moving.

The most senior member of the secretariat after Mr C. P. Srivastava, Ghanaian-born Dr Mensah believes IMO should persevere in forging closer links with other United Nations' bodies — especially where this benefits developing countries.

Not that Dr Mensah is keen to be projected as the "developing country candidate" in the forthcoming election. He insists the ticket he hopes will take him to the top of the IMO ladder is based on fair representation for developed and developing countries alike.

He acknowledges that the funding of IMO is the most urgent problem to be tickled but other issues come high on his list of operational priorities.

Dr Mensah is keen to see greater co-operation between IMO's technical assistance programmes and the various UN regional economic commissions around the world. He believes a cocktail of IMO's technical expertise and the political clout of the locally-based commissions can yield far more from the resources, both human and financial, ploughed into such projects as port development.

The commissions, such as ESCAP in South East Asia, are better placed to identify those schemes which are of the greatest benefit to a region, he says, while IMO has the skill to oversee their completion.

He adds that many of his policies are an extension of those promoted by Mr

IN two weeks, the International Maritime Organisation will elect a new Secretary General from four candidates. Today Shipping Editor GEOFF GARFIELD talks to Ghana's Thomas Aboagye Mensah.

DR Thomas Aboagye Mensah (right), 57, is Ghana's candidate for the post of IMO Secretary-General and has held his present position of Assistant General-Secretary for 21 years. He was educated at the University College of the Gold Coast, University of London and Yale University Law School and is a member of the American Society of International Law and the British Maritime Law Association.

His previous positions include lecturer in law at the University of Ghana 1963-68 and associate legal officer at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna 1965-66.

Srivastava, including emphasis on the training of personnel to ensure that the existing IMO conventions can be implemented by nations before new ones are adopted.

"There is no point having these regulations if the countries can't carry them out," says Dr Mensah, echoing an opinion shared by many and one that has now been enshrined in IMO's "constitution."

IMO's practical response has been in helping developing countries to establish training institutions, seek the funding and furnish them with the necessary advice. The World Maritime University in Malmo is the "apex" which provides



**Thomas
Aboagye
Mensah**

the means for training often high level personnel who can then return to their own countries to pass on their knowledge to the national and regional institutions.

Dr Mensah also intends to continue the efforts of Mr Srivastava in dispelling the impression that IMO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development are in competition.

"I will go further by trying to establish a closer working relationship in areas where I believe active collaboration will not only produce better results for developing countries but help in improving the image of IMO and the United

Nations' system as a whole," says Dr Mensah.

Dr Mensah says IMO has already achieved a great deal in limiting sea pollution by, for example, reducing the operational discharge of oil.

"But there is still a great deal of work to be done and we must continue to improve the procedure for preventing them and dealing with them when they occur.

"We want to get the message across that proper environmental considerations are part and parcel of sustainable development."

This meant persuading developing countries that IMO's work was "genuinely" in their interest and getting rid of the impression sometimes held that regulations were so stringent that they could hinder a country's progress.

"I have been at IMO for 21 years in September, I know the organisation and its problems, and I can provide continuity," says Dr Mensah. "I believe I have the confidence of the developed countries and I can be expected to look at problems impartially and with the wider interests of IMO and the maritime community in mind — I am not partisan in the sense of trying to wage a crusade for the developing world."

The financial problems facing IMO have to be resolved as a matter of urgency, he says. However, the idea of transferring responsibility for contributions from governments to shipowners — advocated by Mr Srivastava and considered worthy of close examination by his "second in command" — recently met with little support.