

The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany,  
H.E. Georg Boomgaarden's speech at the  
World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden, on 10 October 2010

Chancellor, President, Mayor of Malmö, Ladies and Gentlemen and most importantly dear Graduants –

I am deeply honoured to be invited to share this very special day with you. Graduation is a landmark in a lifetime that I am sure you will never forget.

You all come from different parts of the world and have spent a considerable time abroad together. I am sure you have all made new friends. This will enable you to stay connected or to become connected with parts of the world with which you had no ties before. And you all speak the same language, the language of the shipping community.

What a great opportunity in life!

And what a great opportunity for the field you will be working in!

Shipping is a truly international business which requires a horizon beyond borders. It is important to understand where a ship comes from and where it will go to. It is important to closely watch the conditions under which seafarers of all nations are fulfilling their duties.

Because of the international character of shipping it must be our common goal to strengthen the IMO as the regulatory institution for shipping.

We have a choice: Either we get one set of rules and level playing field on the oceans - then IMO is the place to hammer out the rules. Or we get a diverse set of national regulations of port states which can be very complicated for the business.

During the last Assembly - which I had the honour to chair - the importance of the IMO as the main regulatory body of the shipping

universe was again underlined by its great achievements over the last biennium. IMO deals with issues that really matter to peoples lives.

This is the Year of the Seafarer and it is the seafarers who deserve our special concern.

A very recent example is the revised International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). We must not forget: the job of a seafarer is still a dangerous one! We are responsible for ensuring that working and living conditions on board are appropriate. I therefore very much appreciate the outcome of the Manila Diplomatic Conference which I had the pleasure to attend.

Let me briefly outline to you what shipping means to Germany:

Germany is one of the world's leading trading nations. Much of our foreign trade is effected by sea, while Hamburg, Bremen and Bremerhaven are among the world's largest container ports. In 2008 118.9 million tonnes of cargo were handled at the port of Hamburg and 63.5 million tonnes at the ports of Bremen and Bremerhaven. Germany is thus among the group of countries with the greatest interest in international seaborne trade.

For this reason, our maritime sector was been strongly affected by the global downturn that struck the world economy 3 years ago. The economic problems spread out simultaneously across the world, with increasing overcapacity, reduced demand and low freight rates especially in the container sector. In such a situation some operators were tempted to cut costs relating to maintenance, safety and environmental standards, or crews and their welfare. Germany has strongly supported the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General of the IMO and Chancellor of this University in stressing that financial difficulties must not lead to a lowering of standards. If the industry fails to maintain high standards this could lead to environmental disasters and an increase in injuries and even loss of life.

I call upon members of the IMO and the industry to do their utmost to ensure the continued effective implementation and enforcement of IMO's global regulatory framework.

Today we note with great relief that the world economy is recovering and freight rates are increasing accordingly. Germany is optimistic that we can reach the necessary reforms of the international financial systems through the G20. And this is good for the shipping industry and for world trade too.

The merchant fleet operated by German shipowners is one of the youngest and most modern in the world. The world's third-largest container fleet, accounting for some 10% of the world fleet, sails under the German flag. The average age of these ships is around nine years. The entire German-managed fleet (operating under German and foreign flags) currently comprises some 3400 seagoing vessels with a gross tonnage of about 70 million. Germany ensures that ships under its jurisdiction comply strictly with binding international standards on safety, security and environmental protection; vessels operating under the German flag regularly achieve high rankings in international statistics on port state control. And we believe it is important that German shipowners under foreign flags should observe the same high standards.

Germany is also one of the world's leading shipbuilding countries. So new rules on engines with less carbon footprint will boost the industry worldwide: in Germany as well as in all other shipbuilding countries.

We are a party to almost all IMO Conventions. Through their participation in all IMO bodies, German representatives, delegates and experts make an ongoing and active contribution towards advancing the International Maritime Organization's work.

One particular objective of Germany's international shipping policy is to ensure that not only the industry but also countries maintain and further raise high standards in meeting their obligations as flag, port and coastal states. Germany is one of the initiators of the IMO Voluntary Member State Audit Scheme, played an active part in designing the Scheme and successfully underwent the audit process in November 2007.

However, all the work and commitment at the IMO will only truly bear fruit if its regulations are properly understood, implemented and where necessary enforced. And that is where you will have a major role to play

as future world maritime leaders! Shipping will only be safe, environmentally friendly and operating on a level playing field when its regulations are agreed at global level and applied equally everywhere.

It is of paramount importance that maritime leaders in all countries are well qualified.

This is why Germany, as one of the founding countries, has from its very creation in 1983 always been supportive of the World Maritime University. We were proud that we were represented on the Board of Governors from its establishment until the beginning of this year.

The World Maritime University is a unique model of international learning and cooperation. It meets important needs of both developing and developed countries, as well as of the industry.

This is why today many World Maritime Graduates occupy senior management and policy-making positions in their countries or at international level.

A large number of German nationals have taught as visiting professors here at the World Maritime University in Malmö. Since the University's founding Germany has funded more than 280 fellowships to enable students from developing countries to study here. We are happy to also provide opportunities for field studies at German industry, governmental and educational institutions in places such as Bremen, Hamburg and Rostock.

Piracy is one of the great threats to shipping. We support all international effort to fight this scourge. Germany has also provided funding for various threat response seminars organized by the World Maritime University for maritime personnel from developing countries, and has also contributed to the IMO's Security Trust Fund.

We consider the World Maritime University as one of the most successful technical cooperation projects in the international maritime sector, and I can reassure you, Mr President, Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen, that Germany will remain committed to its support. We are therefore also participating actively in the current work of the IMO Council to ensure a

sustainable funding of the University. We appreciate the efforts by the University to establish its Strategic Vision Plan as the basis for the development of the University's business model, funding and operational platform.

Dear Graduates,

While you were here in the beautiful city of Malmö you committed yourself to hard work, and today you will reap the fruits of it. However, I am sure there will be many more moments in the future when you will think what a great decision it was to come to the World Maritime University in Malmö.

Let me wholeheartedly congratulate you on your graduation!