

Greeting by
Minister of Shipping, Maritime Affairs & the Aegean
KOSTIS MOUSSOULOULIS

International Seminar on the Implementation of the
2006 ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC)
(Eugenides Foundation, Thursday 30 May 2013)

Dear President of the Maria Tsakos Foundation,

Distinguished guests from the international shipping Community,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome all our guests to the International Seminar for the understanding and successful implementation of the 2006 Maritime Labor Convention (MLC).

I would like to congratulate the Maria Tsakos Foundation for this initiative but also for the comprehensiveness of this event and, also, to extend a very warm thank-you to the Eugenides Foundation for their hospitality.

I would, especially, like to thank all visitors from abroad, from international organizations and institutions that have keenly accepted to contribute to this conversation circle.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2006 ILO International Maritime Labor Convention is the universal statutory labor map of seafarers.

It is the commitment to decent work principles and welfare on board.

It is their safeguard, guaranteeing they are going to enjoy the same rights always and these are going to be widely accepted in an equitable way.

Finally, it is another proof of the value of the participatory process in decision making on commonly accepted rules.

Often, my friend Efthimios Mitropoulos, an experienced “captain” in maritime affairs and, for many years, at the helm of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), says that:

“Without shipping our world could not exist; without seafarers, however, shipping would not exist either”!

I can only agree and augment by saying that:

“With unhappy seamen on board, shipping could possibly function well enough, but it could definitely not be our world’s driving force”.

A seaman is not simply a paid worker, he literally dedicates his existence to the good operation of the vessel, the assurance of the ship-owner’s and the charter’s interests, but also the safety of the goods carried by the vessel.

Greece, a pioneer country in shipping, decided, from the beginning, to actively support the idea of a revision and integration of the international standards for the labor and welfare conditions of seamen on board.

It implemented this decision by fundamentally participating at all levels of formulating and establishing the Convention.

And this participation was widely recognized.

I remind you that the representative of the Hellenic Ministry of Shipping, Maritime Affairs and the Aegean was one of the two rapporteurs for the adoption of the Convention in the plenary session of the General Conference of the International Labor Organization.

It was the same person that described the Convention adoption procedure as an Odyssey, a typical expression, we tend to use in Greece, for long-standing and painful difficulties. For, the difficulties for the completion of the adoption of the Convention lasted six years, from 2000 until February 23rd, 2006.

The second phase for the Convention commences from the official date of its effect internationally, the 20th August 2013.

I, personally, believe that this phase is equally important to the first.

Certainly, there will be difficulties in the beginning, and this is why the International Labor Organization is going to issue relevant directions for the first 12 months.

This period will provide enough time for its proper adoption and overcoming any possible obstacles.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greece validated the 2006 International Maritime Labor Convention by law 4078/2012.

Any delay is due, mainly, to previous administrative re-arrangements of Ministry of Shipping, Maritime Affairs and the Aegean.

I feel contented, because in September 2012, only two months after the re-establishment of the Ministry of Shipping, Maritime Affairs and the Aegean and on assumption of my position, I had the honor to propose the relevant validating law to the Hellenic Parliament.

A literally Herculean effort began then, in order to adjust Greece's national legislation, which is expected to be completed within the coming days.

This effort proved to be harder than initially anticipated, even though Greece has validated most of the Conventions that are being integrated by the 2006 International Maritime Labor Convention herein.

I am confident that all involved parties: maritime administration, ship-owners and seamen are going to comply with obligation arising from the Convention, proving in practice its significance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Unfortunately, my parliamentary duties do not allow me, even though I would love to, to follow the Seminar's proceedings.

My associates will fill me in on the Seminar's results and conclusions.

I would like to assure you that the Greek maritime administration will continue to defend the principles of free and fair competition in international shipping transport and effectively intervene, supporting the commonly recognized distinctiveness of shipping and maritime labor.

I declare the opening of the International Seminar on the Implementation of the 2006 ILO Maritime Labor Convention and I wish you all good luck!

Thank you very much.