



COUNCIL - 90th session

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTH MEETING

**held at IMO Headquarters, 4 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7SR
on Wednesday, 18 June 2003 at 9.30 a.m.**

Chairman: Mr. CHEN TZE PENN (Singapore)
Vice-Chairman: Mr. J. FRANSON (Sweden)
Secretary-General: Mr. W.A. O'NEIL

A list of participants is given in document C 90/INF.1.

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AGENDA ITEM 34 - APPOINTMENT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (C 90/34 and Add.1-4)

The CHAIRMAN said that the Council now had to consider the appointment of a new Secretary-General. Three Member States had submitted nominations for the position, and the nominees were Mr. M. Jóhannesson (Iceland), Mrs. M.N. Mbanefo (Nigeria) and Mr. E.E. Mitropoulos (Greece). The nominations of the three candidates were contained in document C 90/34 and Add.1-3. The Secretary-General had set out in document C 90/34/Add.4 the Council's Rules of Procedure that governed the appointment of the Secretary-General and the voting procedures.

He invited the candidates to take the floor in alphabetical order, and called on Mr. Jóhannesson to speak first.

Mr. JÓHANNESSON (observer, Iceland), speaking as the candidate for the post of Secretary-General nominated by Iceland, said that his experience as Maritime Administrator and subsequently as Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Environment in his own country had taught him the value of a holistic approach to shipping, maritime safety and security and marine environmental issues, and had led him to conclude that both the Organization and the shipping industry would benefit from approaching those issues from a broader context.

Technological advances such as satellite communication and data-processing, globalization, international trade for development, and environmental issues were creating challenges which called for Member States to adopt new priorities and new approaches. The greatest challenge facing the shipping industry, however, was maritime security, which provided a unique opportunity to rally the various stakeholders in shipping behind the Organization in its common cause. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea defined IMO as the appropriate global authority to set international rules and standards governing international shipping, and in order to achieve the common objective of efficient world seaborne trade, it was essential that IMO should remain the undisputed global authority to set such standards. That was the greatest challenge facing the new Secretary-General.

Another major challenge was to ensure that shipping functioned effectively in the interests of globalization and world trade, while safety, security and environmental protection were maintained at levels acceptable to the world community, particularly in the current climate of growing demand for public information and transparency. It was essential that the Organization should maintain its professional integrity by ensuring that decisions on new measures were based on substantive facts, and that it should not bow to political pressure.

Implementing the Organization's standards was a major concern for all Member States, but it was important to recognize that enforcing those standards presented more of a challenge to some countries than to others. To ensure the future success of IMO, it was therefore essential to foster a co-operative spirit and to promote better implementation of those standards through a more results-orientated and a more widely funded technical co-operation programme, which received funding from international financial institutions and regional development banks as well as from the private sector. It was also his wish better to integrate the programmes of the World Maritime University, the International Maritime Law Institute and the International Maritime Academy with the Organization's Technical Co-operation Programme.

While there remained a compelling need to deal with the many threats to the marine environment, insufficient attention was being paid to the main threat, which, as everyone knew, was not from shipping. The shipping industry would benefit from closer co-operation between IMO and the relevant United Nations organizations over marine environment protection. In that regard, Iceland had been active within the United Nations General Assembly in pursuing an arrangement for a regular global assessment of the marine environment which aimed at setting overall priorities for its protection.

The strength of the Organization derived from the common objectives of its Members. It was therefore essential that the Secretariat should promote a sense of unity of purpose and aim at the highest standards of professionalism and objectivity in serving the Member States. He hoped that the Council would give the Secretary-General every opportunity to promote those standards. In his view, the Secretariat should prioritize four fundamental responsibilities: providing services to facilitate debates and decision-making by Member States, including translation and interpretation during meetings; ensuring that the technical co-operation programme emphasized priority issues and efficient programme delivery; ensuring sufficient external outreach activities and the ability to meet the needs of the shipping industry, the public and the media; and fostering co-operation with other United Nations organizations that benefited the shipping industry. To attain those goals without major budgetary implications, the Secretariat's working culture should become more open and its structure less formal and bureaucratic. Delegating administrative functions would harness more effectively the abilities of individual staff members, and training would motivate and retain staff. Improved services would lead to a reduction in the number of meeting days without loss of efficiency. Staff should be recruited according to the two criteria of quality and equitable representation of IMO Member States to enable different regional views to be expressed.

By adopting the priorities he had outlined, the Organization would be able to meet future challenges and exercise much-needed leadership in promoting quality shipping. If elected, he would use all his skills and practical experience to achieve those aims.

The CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Jóhannesson for his statement, and invited Mrs. Mbanefo to take the floor.

Mrs. MBANEFO (Director, Conference Division), speaking as the candidate for the post of Secretary-General nominated by Nigeria, said that her interest in IMO had been sparked off in 1979 during the celebrations marking World Maritime Day in Lagos, Nigeria. The theme that year of safer shipping and cleaner oceans had never been as important as it was today, nor the work of IMO more relevant. It was essential that IMO should create a comprehensive safety culture for world shipping that embraced vigilance in security matters and environmental protection, and that it should involve the whole of its membership in formulating and adopting safety, security and environmental protection policies within a global framework. The Organization must be proactive in identifying new developments in shipping, and must also anticipate trends that might adversely affect shipping or the environment and take preventive measures.

The instruments and standards adopted by IMO to ensure safe, secure, environmentally sound and sustainable shipping depended for their effectiveness on universal and uniform implementation. However, the knowledge and expertise needed to achieve that aim were unevenly distributed among Member States, and it was therefore essential to focus on capacity-building and to strengthen the Organization's technical co-operation programme.

In order to achieve its aims, IMO needed to be vibrant and efficient and its operation needed to be based on sustainable consensus. In her view, among the qualities required of the new Secretary-General, good management skills were the most important. The best chief executives were not necessarily specialists in the field of their organization, but were able to take a wider view and get the best out of those who worked for them and those for whom they worked. It would be her duty, as Secretary-General, to create unity among the Organization's Member States, to build consensus among countries of widely varying power, interest and ability in the shipping world, and to put forward new ideas to keep the Organization abreast of the times.

That IMO was one of the best run United Nations organizations was due to the efforts both of Member States and of Mr. O'Neil, and she intended to build on their achievements by enhancing the Organization's status and effectiveness. To achieve that goal, she would focus on better implementation and better management of resources, anticipate problems in order to prevent them from resulting in accidents, exercise prudence in IMO's financial management, and make Member States feel that the Organization represented them. As Secretary-General, she would provide the ideas and the support to make global regulation a reality rather than an aspiration.

The CHAIRMAN thanked Mrs. Mbanefo for her statement, and invited Mr. Mitropoulos to take the floor.

Mr. MITROPOULOS (Assistant Secretary-General and Director, Maritime Safety Division), speaking as the candidate for the post of Secretary-General nominated by Greece, said that he was psychologically and physically prepared to shoulder the heavy responsibilities that went with the post of Secretary-General, and pledged his full commitment to the ideals and objectives of the United Nations in general and of IMO in particular. He had been associated with the Organization for almost 40 years, for 24 of which he had worked in the Secretariat. He had been Director of the Maritime Safety Division and Secretary of the Maritime Safety Committee for 11 consecutive years. Those years had seen many improvements in safety, security and the environment, to the achievement of which his Division had no doubt made some contribution. He was therefore grateful to the Secretary-General for placing his trust in him and was privileged to have served under his leadership.

Winds of change were blowing everywhere, and he believed that he was able to receive and interpret the message that they brought. He was therefore prepared to listen to, observe and implement to the best of his ability, and with the support of his colleagues in the Secretariat, the wishes of the Assembly and the Council, always acting within the policies and strategies set by both and in the best interests of the Organization. While recognizing that it took many views to make balanced decisions, he would not allow personal feelings to blur his political judgement.

The Council had embarked on a number of reforms to enable the Organization to face the challenging times ahead. Changes were required and changes should be made, not, in his opinion, as a proof of failure, but as an indication of IMO's energy and determination to adjust to changing conditions while continuing to sail with the winds in search of calmer seas and safer havens. For some conservative minds, change was neither good nor even necessary, but in a constantly changing world, it was to the Organization's advantage to learn how to adapt. He intended to continue the process of reform and to suggest further changes, including the introduction of a simpler decision-making structure and a clearer focus on Members' demands, needs and wishes.

As the Organization's Chief Administrative Officer, he would also do his best to provide Members with sound, well-balanced advice, characterized by a due sense of proportion, to assist them in making the right decisions when debating how to shape the Organization's strategies and policies. While running the affairs of the Organization between successive sessions of the Council, he would always act in full compliance with those strategies and policies. In leading the Organization, he would uphold, defend and promote IMO's interests to the best of his ability and would actively contribute towards all attempts to reach consensus in matters on its agenda.

When representing the Organization internationally, he would strive to maintain the status of IMO as the only forum in which safety, security and pollution prevention and control standards affecting shipping in international trade should be developed and adopted. Regionalism, in the sense of requiring ships flying foreign flags to comply with standards that went beyond the IMO standards agreed among parties to the same convention, was a threat to an industry as international as shipping and also undermined the status of the industry's regulatory body. It would be his duty, as Secretary-General, to work as hard as necessary to avert any danger of unilateral or regional initiatives affecting the industry and the Organization.

He was proud of the shipping industry and of the major contribution shipping made to world trade, and could not accept that it was in as bad a predicament as was so often suggested in the aftermath of a serious casualty. That did not mean that IMO should not criticize any wrongdoers whose mistakes or oversights brought adverse publicity and cast the industry in a poor light. In that connection, he was determined to make the Audit Scheme the success it deserved to be, in order that, through rigorous implementation of its provisions and through assistance to Members in need, the world could be rid of substandard ships. He would also ensure that the Organization contributed towards ridding the industry of any other substandard elements.

Despite the steady decline in the number of ships and lives lost and the decrease in pollution generated from ships, both of which trends were due to the beneficial effect of the standards developed and implemented by IMO, the image of the shipping industry remained vulnerable to the adverse side-effects of accidents. While the Organization's prime duty was to prevent accidents, its work should also be directed towards ensuring that, once an accident had happened, a system was in place to minimize its impact on human lives, property and the environment. That done, he would make himself responsible for keeping the public and politicians informed of IMO's work in the service of an industry that represented the cleanest and cheapest mode of transporting over 90% of the world's goods and for making them aware of IMO's vital contribution to efforts to achieve a clean marine environment.

In view of the importance of shipping to world trade and the world economy, it was vital to ensure the uninterrupted flow of international seaborne trade. He would therefore make certain that IMO contributed efficiently and effectively towards protecting ships, ports, offshore terminals and other marine facilities against terrorist attacks.

It would be his duty as Secretary-General to help IMO act as a truly specialized agency of the United Nations, serving the maritime world efficiently and realistically and deriving its strength from co-operation. The ITCP was the catalyst for enhancing the standards of Member States lacking the necessary know-how, expertise and infrastructure, and he would ensure that it played an ever-increasing role in the quest for enhanced safety, security and environmental

protection. Education and training were crucial facets of technical co-operation, and IMO had a wonderful record in that area: WMU, IMLI and IMA were beacons of excellence in their respective fields, thanks to the tireless efforts of Mr. O'Neil, with whom he would continue to work in his role as Chancellor of WMU.

He saw the ideal Secretary-General as an executive head who led by example: motivating, inspiring, taking initiatives and delegating; providing strategic and policy direction on IMO's work programme and on technical matters on its agenda, based on the relevant decisions of Council and the Assembly; overseeing IMO management and ensuring accountability; displaying diplomatic and political skills in the handling of IMO's affairs at international level; knowledgeable about shipping while being more than a mere technocrat, and possessing character credentials of the highest standard.

His prime objective would be to pursue IMO goals by delivering high quality services and continuing to sharpen the strategic focus of the Organization, thereby offering stakeholder value. In managing finances he would exercise prudence and diligence, in line with Council policies and the IMO Financial Rules and Regulations, and he was confident of having the senior management team needed to deliver those objectives. Among his duties and responsibilities would be to motivate staff and to bring in new blood when necessary.

As both a representative of his country and a staff member of long standing, he knew the strengths and weaknesses of the system. He felt that he had matured alongside the Organization and considered it a unique opportunity and privilege to use his hard-earned experience in its service.

He believed that he could bring genuine inspirational qualities to the task of enhanced delivery in a continuously changing and challenging environment. In endeavouring to do so, he would continue to apply the principles governing his whole life, namely leading by example; setting the right priorities; following his instincts when assessing what was, or was not right, fair and just; and speaking only when there was something to say. In sharing those principles with his associates and staff, he would ask them clearly and unambiguously, in addition to their undisputed high standards of professionalism, to display high standards of integrity and decency at all times.

IMO's strength lay in the unity among its Members, and it was the Secretary-General's paramount duty to ensure that they remained united and to act swiftly and decisively to avert disunity. Nothing would give him greater pleasure when addressing the Council and Assembly than to confirm that that unity was stronger than ever before.

Over his many years of service to the Organization he had always tried to fight the good fight and keep the faith. It was now up to Members to assess his track record as a guarantee for the future, and to act according to their convictions.

The CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Mitropoulos for his statement.

As all candidates had expressed their views, he proposed that the Council hold a closed meeting for the purpose of appointing the new Secretary-General. He invited the candidates as well as representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and members of the Secretariat to leave the room, leaving present at the meeting representatives of Members of the Council and Members of the Organization participating in the Council's deliberations under Article 20 of the IMO Convention and rule 4 of the Council's Rules of Procedure.

The persons mentioned left the room.

The open meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and the Council proceeded with the election of the Secretary-General in a closed meeting. The open meeting resumed at 11 a.m.* after the candidates, representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and members of the Secretariat had returned to the room.

The CHAIRMAN congratulated Mr. Mitropoulos on his election as Secretary-General.

Mr. SANDIS (Greece) thanked all Members of the Council for their overwhelming confidence in and support for the candidacy of Mr. Mitropoulos.

Mr. MITROPOULOS (Assistant Secretary-General and Director, Maritime Safety Division,) thanked Members of the Council for electing him. He could only return the honour bestowed upon him by living up to expectations, and he pledged to commit himself to providing a high-quality service. The challenge of his life would be to build on the legacy of two great men, Mr. Srivastava and Mr. O'Neil, under whom he had been fortunate to serve, and he would count on Members' understanding, support, advice and co-operation and on the invaluable assistance of the staff of the Organization.

Over the past 11 years he had realized IMO's good fortune first, in having at the helm Mr. Srivastava at a time when it was expanding its membership in the developing world, and secondly Mr. O'Neil at a time when it needed to consolidate its position on the international scene. History would record their many achievements, and he applauded the wisdom of Members in appointing the right man at the right time. He would do his utmost to prove himself their worthy successor.

Council had endorsed his performance in managing the Maritime Safety Division and his contribution to the work of the Maritime Safety Committee as its Secretary for over 11 years, and for that much of the credit should go to his colleagues in the Division. The variety and complexity of MSD and MSC issues meant that a successful response to demands could only be assured by a collective effort. He was grateful to the Secretary-General for placing such highly-qualified, professional staff in the Division and to Member States for making them available. Success was possible only when it was built on the support, co-ordination and co-operation of others, and the least he could do was to thank them publicly.

He also expressed his gratitude to his wife, son and daughter for their moral support over the years.

He had not considered Mrs. Mbanefo and Mr. Jóhannesson as rivals or opponents but rather as fellow candidates, whom he held in high esteem. The outcome of the ballot should not be seen in terms of winners and losers, but should rather be heralded as the dawn of a new day. He asked everyone to join forces to create a better maritime world, based on high standards of safety, security and environmental protection, a world in which competition was based on transparency and on providing high quality services rather than the poor quality services afforded by substandard ships, manned by substandard crews, classed with substandard classification societies and in the hands of substandard entrepreneurs.

* No summary records were prepared for the closed meeting that was held from 10.15 to 11 a.m.
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He concluded by thanking Council Members once again for the great honour they had paid his country and himself by entrusting to him the leadership of IMO. He hoped that the Assembly would approve its decision, as nothing would give him greater satisfaction than to be able to direct all his energies towards serving IMO and all it stood for. He was determined to uphold the dignity and honour of the Organization and to carry out his duties and responsibilities as honestly and diligently as possible, which he knew would be a very difficult task. With Members' support and with God's help, he would succeed.

Mr. OZUGERGIN (Turkey), supported by Mr. FRANSON (Sweden), Mr. NMEIR (Lebanon), Mr. AMEYAW-AKUMFI (Ghana) and Mr. SAN MIGUEL (Venezuela), expressed Turkey's great satisfaction at the election of Mr. Mitropoulos. IMO today occupied its rightful place at centre stage of the shipping world, and members were grateful to Mr. O'Neil for so skilfully overseeing its work. He congratulated the Governments of Iceland, Greece and Nigeria for producing such competent candidates and pledged Turkey's complete support for Mr. Mitropoulos, whose professional and personal abilities, consistently displayed over many years in the service of IMO, inspired full confidence.

Mr. BARKINDO (Nigeria) warmly congratulated Mr. Mitropoulos on his landslide victory and offered Nigeria's maximum co-operation in his onerous task. All three candidates had proclaimed their intention of serving IMO to the best of their ability in the wider world, and he hoped that the Organization would reach even greater heights under the leadership of Mr. Mitropoulos. He wished to record Nigeria's gratitude to all those who had voted for Mrs. Mbanefo.

Mr. O'BRIEN (Bahamas) said the election had been a contest between three exceptional candidates, but the Council had decided to entrust the immediate future of the Organization to the candidate with the widest experience in dealing with the challenges facing it. The choice would ensure continuity, but Mr. Mitropoulos would also have the opportunity to impress his own stamp in the coming years. As Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Maritime Safety Division, he had shown exceptional dedication and leadership. He thanked him for his advice to the Bahamas over the years, and looked forward to continuing to work with him.

Mr. GUNNLAUGSSON (observer, Iceland) offered his congratulations to Mr. Mitropoulos on his victory, which had shown that the Organization wanted to strengthen its leadership, and Mrs. Mbanefo of Nigeria for her contribution. On the basis of consultations over the past few months, Iceland had expected more votes but Mr. Mitropoulos had won convincingly and he pledged him Iceland's full trust and support.

Ms KLEOPAS (Cyprus) also congratulated Mr. Mitropoulos on his well-deserved election and wished him every success, to the benefit of the Organization, Member States and the shipping community at large. She expressed appreciation to Iceland and Nigeria for nominating such able candidates.

Mr. VASSALLO (Malta) commended the efforts of Mrs. Mbanefo and Mr. Jóhannesson in standing for election, inspired by a desire to serve the Organization and to see it flourish. Malta welcomed the election of Mr. Mitropoulos to the highest post of the Organization and promised him the support that he deserved. He thanked Greece for nominating such a prominent figure, who would lead IMO to success in attaining its objectives.

Mr. GENNÉ (Argentina), supported by Mr. NASTRUCCI (Italy), said that the professional qualifications and experience of Mr. Mitropoulos would guarantee the success of his leadership. In thanking the other two candidates, he expressed the hope that their positive ideas for the future of IMO would be taken on board by the new administration.

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ (Honduras) said that developing countries were increasingly looking to IMO for support, and he was accordingly extremely satisfied by the decision of the Council. Mr. Mitropoulos was a worthy successor to Mr. O'Neil, who would ensure that the initiatives the latter had launched were followed up and implemented. He congratulated Nigeria and Iceland on presenting such worthy candidates.

Mr. FERNÁNDEZ (Panama) said Mr. Mitropoulos's integrity, professional qualities and devotion to the Organization would ensure his success in safeguarding the position of IMO as the sole body entrusted with the implementation and development of instruments for the protection of human life at sea and of the maritime environment, and Panama would give him its full support. He congratulated Mr. O'Neil on his excellent work and wished him every success in the future.

Mr. BAUTISTA (Philippines) said he was confident that Mr. Mitropoulos would carry forward the work of the Organization, particularly in relation to a safer working environment for seafarers and the role of human resources in the maritime industry. He thanked Nigeria and Iceland for presenting such admirable candidates and expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General for his contribution to IMO's work. His Government would give Mr. Mitropoulos its full support, especially in regard to promoting the culture of change within the Organization.

Mr. GASC (France), commending Mrs. Mbanefo and Mr. Jóhannesson for their courage in standing for election, said healthy competition was important for the Organization. France recognized the importance of broad support for the new appointment. Mr. Mitropoulos was a fair and just man and also a trustworthy one, and France was confident that it could put its trust in him to safeguard the future of IMO and of the maritime community.

Mrs. SEET-CHENG (Singapore) joined in paying tribute to the candidates and in congratulating Mr. Mitropoulos. The vote had been for a Secretary-General pledged to bring about change where change was required and to represent fairly the interests of all regions of the maritime world.

Mr. ROWE (United Kingdom) commended Mrs. Mbanefo and Mr. Jóhannesson on the way they had conducted their campaigns. The papers they had circulated were thought-provoking, and the United Kingdom would be giving due consideration to the points raised. He congratulated Mr. Mitropoulos on his election and on achieving the broad-based support which he had sought. His delegation had every confidence that in the future IMO would maintain the high standards set by the current Secretary-General.

Mr. AGUILAR-SALAZAR (Mexico), supported by Mr. PACHA VICENTE (Spain), joining the tributes paid to Mrs. Mbanefo and Mr. Jóhannesson, said he had often had occasion to witness the gifts of Mr. Mitropoulos for achieving reconciliation, clarifying doubts, and finding solutions to problems. Mexico greatly appreciated the work of the current Secretary-General and offered its full support to his successor.

Mr. JOSEPH (India) congratulated Mr. Mitropoulos on his well-deserved election, and recalled with gratitude the occasions when India had benefited from his wisdom and experience. He was sure that IMO would continue to scale great heights of achievement under the stewardship of Mr. Mitropoulos, as it had done under the current Secretary-General.

Mr. EUN LEE (Republic of Korea) associated himself with previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Mitropoulos, and said he was confident that he would lead the Organization as successfully as he had led the Organization's Committees over 11 years. The Republic of Korea would continue to co-operate with him in working to achieve the aims of the world maritime community. He thanked the Secretary-General for his excellent leadership, and for encouraging IMO to take a proactive role in promoting maritime safety and combating marine pollution.

Mr. HANSEN (Denmark) congratulated IMO on the election of an excellent Secretary-General who had the abilities, knowledge and heart to lead the Organization in the future. Denmark would support him to the full in his efforts to unify all Member States in working for better shipping and to give IMO the leading role and image it deserved.

Mr. GRÉGOIRE (Canada), Mr. STUITJE (Netherlands), Mr. NYGAARD (Norway), Mr. GRABOWSKI (Poland) and Mr. KORAN (United States) joined previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Mitropoulos on his election and commending Mrs. Mbanefo and Mr. Jóhannesson on their candidatures.

The CHAIRMAN said that the representatives of Bangladesh, China, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Peru, Portugal and South Africa had also indicated their wish to convey congratulations to Mr. Mitropoulos.

The election of Mr. Mitropoulos to the post of Secretary-General of IMO was greeted by acclamation.

Mr. MITROPOULOS (Assistant Secretary-General and Director, Maritime Safety Division) thanked Members of the Council for their kind words. He had noted the important points and matters of substance raised, which he would bear in mind for the future.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.