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Circular Letter No.3922
23 January 2019

To: IMO Members and other Governments
United Nations and specialized agencies
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **World Maritime Day and Day of the Seafarer, 2019**

The Secretary-General has the honour to advise that:

- .1 **World Maritime Day** this year will be celebrated at IMO Headquarters on 26 September 2019, when the traditional diplomatic reception will take place;
- .2 the **2019 World Maritime Day Parallel Event** will be celebrated in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Colombia, from 15 to 17 September; and
- .3 the annual **Day of the Seafarer**, as usual, will be celebrated on 25 June 2019.

This year's theme for **World Maritime Day** is "**Empowering Women in the Maritime Community**" and a background paper is annexed to this circular letter to assist Member Governments and international organizations in preparing their own activities and communications for use in observing World Maritime Day.

The 2019 World Maritime Day logo is already available to download from the IMO website in all of the Organization's official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish (click [here](#) for direct access). In addition, the Secretary-General's message on this year's theme will be distributed in due course.

In order to promote the Day more widely, Member Governments and international organizations are encouraged to organize, wherever possible, suitable events throughout the year to celebrate World Maritime Day and inform the Secretariat as early as possible of any planned activities. Social media participation is also encouraged via Twitter, by using the hashtag #WorldMaritimeDay. Photographs of the events can also be sent to: media@imo.org

The focus for the **World Maritime Day Parallel Event** will also be this year's theme: "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community". Activities will include panel discussions by distinguished international experts addressing important areas of the maritime sector,

supported by key specialists who will speak about the role of women in the maritime world. There will also be a separate round-table discussion, at ministerial level, highlighting the World Maritime Day theme, as well as addressing other pressing issues in the global maritime community.

Member States and international organizations are invited to attend the World Maritime Day Parallel Event in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. Further details will be circulated in good time. Preliminary information can already be found at the official website for the event: www.worldmaritimedaycolombia.com

For 2019, the focus of the **Day of the Seafarer** campaign will be closely related to the World Maritime Day theme and a social media campaign will be organized to mark the Day. Details of the campaign and how to participate, together with a variety of materials and "content opportunities" to assist participation, will be posted on the IMO website (www.imo.org) in due course.

ANNEX

WORLD MARITIME DAY 2019 EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE MARITIME COMMUNITY

Background paper

Throughout history, shipping has been a male-dominated industry. However, through IMO's gender and capacity-building programme, which is now in its 30th year, the Organization has been making a concerted effort to help the industry move forward and help women achieve a representation that is in keeping with twenty-first century expectations. In placing the human element and capacity-building high on its agenda, IMO recognizes that the shipping industry must reach out to every sector of the community if it is to attract the very best people to pursue a maritime career.

As a specialized agency of United Nations (UN), IMO has a strong commitment to helping achieve the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). IMO continues to support the participation of women in both shore-based and seagoing posts, in line with the goals outlined under SDG 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", under the slogan: Training-Visibility-Recognition. This year's theme gives IMO a unique opportunity to work with various maritime stakeholders towards achieving the SDGs, in particular SDG 5.

The progress achieved by IMO in gender integration dates back to 1988. Then, few maritime training institutes opened their doors to female students, but IMO was in the vanguard of UN specialized agencies that forged a global programme known as the Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector. Carried out over several phases, it put in place an institutional framework to incorporate a gender dimension into IMO's policies and procedures, with resolutions adopted to ensure access to maritime training and employment opportunities for women in the maritime sector.

Today, IMO's Women in Maritime gender programme is delivering tangible outcomes. Under IMO's auspices, seven regional maritime associations for women have been established in Africa, Arab States, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific, covering some 70 countries and 230 participants. These associations provide a springboard for developing regional training opportunities to match the specific needs and requirements of women, taking into account the sociocultural elements which determine access to training and career development. Access to these regional associations has provided members with a platform to discuss a number of gender and technical related issues, to share experiences and lessons learned and assist with narrowing some of the institutional barriers and cultural stigma that women who enter the maritime industry face.

Already present in all of IMO's gender initiatives, both as key stakeholders and mentors, are the female graduates of the IMO's World Maritime University and International Maritime Law Institute, whose presence as maritime administrators and decision makers has reinforced the impact that female role models have in encouraging new female recruits

Furthermore, IMO supports the empowerment of women through gender-specific fellowships; by facilitating access to high-level technical training for women in the maritime sector in developing countries; and providing an enabling environment for the identification and selection of women, by their respective authorities, for career development opportunities in maritime administrations, ports and maritime training institutes.

Defying traditional expectations, women are increasingly present at sea all around the world. Their full and meaningful participation in the economy, political decision-making and society is key to addressing maritime challenges, but gender equality in the maritime sector is too often overlooked.

The maritime sector needs "all hands on deck", both male and female, if it is to take on the challenges of carrying the world's goods and fuel in an efficient, safe and clean manner. Translating this into action requires bold and forward-thinking maritime administrations, and men and women prepared to break centuries-old sociocultural patterns. More women on board will go a long way to solving challenges faced by the maritime industry, especially the shortage of skilled seafarers. The way to alleviate this issue is to convince more young people, both men and women, to seek a long-term career in the maritime sector by seizing their interest from a very young age; and by providing safe working environments, particularly within the limited confines of a ship.

Significantly, the beneficiaries of IMO's work in support of gender equality are not just the training recipients themselves, but also national maritime administrations as a whole, for which effective maritime transport is key to economic infrastructure development. The clear testimony from all of IMO's gender equality initiatives is that empowering women fuels thriving economies across the world, spurs growth and development, and benefits all of us working in the global maritime community as we strive towards safe, secure, clean and sustainable shipping.
