



COMITÉ MARITIME INTERNATIONAL

PRESIDENT

9 November 2020

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Re: Hon. William "Bill" O'Neil

Dear Colleagues,

Many of you may by now have read (either through the October 2020 edition of the IMO Newsletter or from the IMO website) the sad news concerning the passing of the former IMO Secretary-General, the Hon. William "Bill" O'Neil, on 29th October, 2020, aged 93, at his home in the United Kingdom.

In the course of his fourteen-year tenure as IMO Secretary-General (1990-2004), Mr O'Neil made an enormous contribution to the creation, implementation and unification of international maritime law, which was recognized by CMI through the conferral on him of CMI Membership *Honoris Causa*, an honour conferred on only a very few.

Under his stewardship, IMO adopted a number of mandatory treaties and codes designed to improve the safety and security of international shipping, notably the introduction of the mandatory International Safety Management (ISM) Code and the key revisions to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1998.

Following the unprecedented attacks to the Twin Towers in New York City on 11 September 2001, Mr O'Neil quickly mobilised action through the IMO Council which culminated in the adoption of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, an entirely new regime for the security of ships both at sea and in ports, as well as the adoption, though the Legal Committee, of two Protocols in 2005 relating to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation and its Protocol regarding the Safety of Fixed Platforms on the

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Continental Shelf. These new legal instruments provided, *inter alia*, for search and seizure powers of suspect ships and those on board as well as conferring international jurisdiction for the subsequent prosecution of suspected terrorists, wherever in the world they might be.

On the environment front, under Mr O'Neil's watch, a new Annex VI to MARPOL on Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships was adopted, the first international treaty of its kind, as well as revisions to phase out single hull tankers. He was also a driving force behind the adoption in 2004 of the Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, aimed at reducing and controlling harmful aquatic organisms that are present in ships' ballast water, which can contaminate other regions of the world, threatening biodiversity and leading to untold economic damage.

Also, under his watch, IMO also adopted (again through the Legal Committee) Protocols to the 1969 Civil Liability Convention and the 1971 Fund Convention, which substantially upgraded the levels of compensation for victims of oil pollution incidents at sea and which widened the scope of application of the original treaties. Encouraged by him, these two Protocols entered into force in 1996, a remarkably short period in the context of international conventions.

Mr O'Neil was also an active supporter of both the World Maritime University (WMU) of which he was Chancellor and the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) of which he was Chairman of the Governing Board. In so doing, he recognized that the many graduates of the programmes offered by these two training institutions, which cater largely (but no longer exclusively) to graduates in developing countries, could undoubtedly play a key role in enabling their administrations to adopt and implement the more than 50 extant IMO treaties and codes, thereby promoting their uniform international application. This has proven to be the case, with several graduates of both institutions attaining high positions in their respective countries and returning to IMO as members or leaders of their delegations.

Our CMI Secretary-General, Rosalie Balkin, whom he appointed in 1998 as Director of the Legal Affairs and External Relations Division of IMO, and who worked closely with Mr O'Neil in that capacity until his retirement and I extend our heartfelt sympathy and condolences as well as those of the CMI Assembly and Executive Council, to Mr O'Neil's wife Olga and to his children.

His passing is a huge loss to the international maritime community and to CMI. He will be sorely missed.

Faithfully yours,



Christopher O. Davis
President, CMI



Rosalie Balkin
Secretary-General, CMI