



# COMITE MARITIME INTERNATIONAL

## PRESIDENT

### President's address

### Gothenburg Colloquium Opening Ceremony 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024

Distinguished guests, dear friends.

1. Welcome to Gothenburg. How very fortunate we are to be here at probably one of the most beautiful times of the year in this glorious weather. The last time the CMI was in Gothenburg was in 1923 and I know that Paula will tell you more about that.
2. Thank you dear Paula Backden President of the Swedish MLA and to all of your team and thank you to all the organising committee particularly Secretary General Rosalie Balkin and Administrator Eveline Peters for the organisation of this colloquium. The organisation of this event started shortly after we left Montreal and the organising committee has left no stone unturned in producing what we believe is a hugely varied academic programme quite apart from the social programme which will see us going back to the roaring 20's during the gala dinner.
3. The idea of having a 1920's themed gala dinner came whilst we were speaking on how fitting it would be to celebrate at this Colloquium the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hague Rules of 1924 – one of the greatest contributions of the CMI to the unification of international maritime law. With over 90% of world trade today being carried by sea, it makes it crucial more than ever before, to have this sector properly regulated by an international regime which is contemporary and fit for today's purpose, hence one of the focuses of this colloquium will be the Rotterdam Rules.

4. Drafting conventions is what the CMI is known for and of course our very latest jewel in the CMI crown – the Convention on the International Effects of Judicial Sales of Ships, has since Montreal been signed off in Beijing in September 2024. I think I can speak for Henry Li when I say it was very probably one of the happiest days of our mutual careers to see the fruit of two working groups, one that drafted the convention and one that pushed it through UNCITRAL arrive to the all important signing ceremony in Beijing and to see 15 countries sign up to it. These 15 were followed by another 2 a few weeks later. Regrettably the EU had not yet finalised its procedures by then and so no EU member state was able to sign up.
5. In line with what I believe to be another deliverable of the CMI we have worked very hard indeed with the EU and encouraged it to finalise its internal procedures so that on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March of this year the EU signed the Convention in New York together with Belgium, the first EU member state to sign the convention. A few weeks ago Luxembourg followed suit. This brings the signatory states to 19 plus the European Union.
6. The road is now open for EU member states to sign the convention and so the Maltese government is organising a celebratory event to which EU Member states and all countries with diplomatic credentials to Malta have been invited to attend to hear about the advantages of signing. Those present will also be given the opportunity of signing the actual convention. This is quite an exceptional affair because the UN Treaty Book normally only leaves the UN once to go to the country indicated by the General Assembly of the United Nations as the one holding the signing ceremony of the Convention which was Beijing. So exceptionally the treaty book will be brought to Malta and Mr. Miguel Serpa de Soares, Under secretary General of the UN will be accompanying the treaty book and attending in person. Also present will be Mr. Richard Sonnenshien, Director General from the Justice Directorate at the European Commission.
6. The CMI has throughout played a key role in co-ordinating these efforts between the Maltese government, UNCITRAL and the EUROPEAN UNION and various states. We did this because we recognise that post drafting and adoption the CMI must continue to follow up with signing until ratification and coming into force of a convention.
7. The ink hasn't yet quite dried on our Convention on the International effects of judicial sales and we have a number of interesting projects in

the pipeline. A number of these projects will be showcased during our colloquium: decarbonisation, safety and security risks to commercial shipping and how these effect the insurance market, sanctions, mobile offshore renewable units, MASS, EU regulation, our Lex Marittima project, the future of Lloyds Open Form, – these are all exciting topics happening in real time and the CMI is in real time taking them forward.

8. We are ladies and gentlemen living in challenging times. There are some very serious scenarios which are threatening world order and international shipping and the new Secretary General of the IMO, Mr. Arsenio Dominguez, shared with me his concerns during my meeting with him earlier this year. I pledged to him the support of CMI confirming that the CMI is there willing and able to assist. And one project we will be actively involved in is the project announced at LEG 111 only a few weeks ago relating to the urgent need to address fraudulent registrations and fraudulent activity. Each and every marine litigation lawyer in this room and beyond has over the past year or so seen a marked increase in this phenomenon. The British delegation at the IMO will be leading this effort and I have already communicated with them and pledged our assistance through our extensive network of NMLAs.
9. This colloquium and indeed every CMI colloquium, seminar or conference would not materialise if it were not for the Speakers, Chairs and Panellists who have kindly agreed to share their time with us. Thank you all.
10. These fall roughly into 2 categories. The category made up of those who I consider to be CMI born and bred practitioners and academics – CMI Activists. To these I say thank you because I know only too well how challenging it is to cope with a busy practice and to dedicate the time required for the high quality work output which the Comite is famous for. The second category is made up of persons who are not perhaps CMI “activists” but who have accepted to come and participate at our colloquium to speak, to deliver papers and to participate in our panels none the less. A number of these also come from industry and are our esteemed consultative members. We have a record number of Consultative Members participating in this colloquium this year from IMO, BIMCO, ICS, IGP&I, ISU, WMU, IMLI, ITF, EMLO, IBA, And to these we say welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate and to share your expert knowledge. I am convinced that today more than ever before, Industry needs the CMI to provide it with solid solutions aimed at the unification of international maritime law, and the Comite needs industry to ensure that the solutions it provides are fit for purpose. It is

this meeting of expert minds from law and industry from different cultures, jurisdictions and disciplines, which provides food for thought, challenging debate between established veteran practitioners and experts and industry players and yet provides fertile learning experiences and opportunities for our younger members who are given the space to hear, to contribute and to mix with world authorities on the various subjects and above all to meet friends and make new acquaintances.

11. Thank you all for coming to our Colloquium. I hope you will all have, as I certainly will, a fruitful and enjoyable few days at the CMI Colloquium in Gothenburg.

Thank you