

Friday, 6 March 2020

Statement made at SSE 7 regarding International Women's Day

It is an honour to read this statement on behalf of multiple Member States and observer delegations here at the IMO, who wish to acknowledge the importance of the International Women's Day - March 8, also known as International Women's Rights Day in some countries, that will be celebrated on Sunday, this year. The theme of the International Women's Day 2020 is "I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights".

International Women's Rights Day highlights the struggle for women's rights and provides an important reminder to governments, businesses and individuals that global development must include equal participation of men and women. This special day reminds us of the ongoing need to ensure that men and women enjoy full and equal rights and participation in their economies, politics, employment, communities and families. As part of this, nations must work towards eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls.

Unfortunately, women are often exposed to violence, hardship and discrimination in all spheres, everywhere. Women and girls are the first to be affected by poverty, conflict and climate change.

We need to change.

The United Nations has long recognised the importance of gender equality. The UN declared International Women's Day officially in 1975. Further, the Millennium Development Goals introduced MDG 3: which aimed to promote gender equality and empower women. Additionally, the UN published in 2015 its sustainable development goals to be achieved by 2030, including SDG 5 aiming to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls.

SDG 5 is a crosscutting theme that underpins all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030.

2020 will mark the 25th anniversary of the 4th United Nations World Conference for Women held in Beijing in 1995 and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action ; therefore UN Women is organizing this year the Summit of the "Generation Equality" forum" in May in Mexico city and in July in Paris.

Further we need to change because we have good reason to do so.

Research shows that countries with higher gender equality have stronger economic growth and sustainable development. Companies with women in leadership positions perform better. Peace agreements that involve women are more effective and sustainable. Parliaments that have female members adopt more laws on basic social issues, such as health, education, non-discrimination and family benefits.

Equality for all genders is one of the major challenges of human development in the world. Equality is not only a political and ethical issue, but also a guarantee of the effectiveness of development policies. By strengthening the rights of women and girls, it is humanity as a whole that makes progress.

Commendation must go to the IMO for the many positive efforts it has made in this regard including the Women in Maritime Programme and the related regional women's associations.

Additionally, in a bid to reduce the gender gaps that persist in maritime transport, ports, fisheries and related sectors, the theme "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community" was selected for World Maritime Day theme 2019, which was marked on Thursday, September 26. Many events and other initiatives took place last year demonstrating our organization's commitment to help Member States implement the United

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Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs, including Goal 5.

One of the highlights of 2019 was the establishment – exactly one year ago – of the IMO Gender Equality Network, which successfully continues to serve as a forum for Member States and observer delegations to exchange information, ideas and best practices to help remove barriers and increase women's participation in the maritime sector.

Most importantly, in 2019, the IMO Assembly adopted Resolution A.1147(31) entitled "PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF THE WORLD MARITIME THEME FOR 2019 AND ACHIEVING A BARRIER FREE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN IN THE MARITIME SECTOR."

The resolution urges governments, maritime administrations and the industry to endeavour to reach a barrier-free environment for women, so that all women can participate fully, safely and without hindrance in the activities of the maritime community, including seafaring and shipbuilding activities.

It also encourages efforts to collect, consolidate and analyse data relating to the participation of women in the maritime sector in order to identify gaps and inform policies to remove barriers and increase their participation.

The resolution calls also upon continuing the open dialogue and wider engagement between the Member States and observer delegations in developing concrete initiatives.

Let me be clear: 2019 was just a kick starter, a year for awareness for our organization.

The efforts must continue.

The use of inclusive language in our texts, the organization of an annual SDG 5 event, an annual award to recognize the best initiative to promote "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community," a communication plan highlighting gender issues and equality for all, parity on the various panels of experts at conferences or symposia, reliable measurement tools on women's presence in the maritime industry and a reporting on this, and the inclusion of SDG 5 in technical cooperation, notably by using the OECD's gender marker, are all initiatives we could take forward. There are certainly others.

It is up to us to propose other initiatives, select them and make them happen.

On January 27, 2020, Despina Panayiotou Theodosiou, President of the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA International), which strives to advance women's role and reflect women's presence in the maritime sector, and Kitack Lim, Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization signed a Memorandum of Understanding aiming to increase and formalise technical cooperation on women specific issues in the maritime sector. WISTA International will play an important role in helping IMO further its reach to women in the maritime sector, like other IMO stakeholders.

The 2019 theme of "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community" has undoubtedly been a success; however, it is imperative that we continue to ensure, between now and 2030, that the realisation of this resolution becomes reality.

As António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, said last year: "Against this backdrop, we need to redouble our efforts to protect and promote women's rights, dignity and leadership. We must not give ground that has been won over decades and we must push for wholesale, rapid and radical change."

It is therefore important that IMO, as a leading organization in the maritime, we do not just embrace this change, but that we actively compel into action.

Friday, 6 March 2020

There cannot be “sustainable shipping for a sustainable planet” without us continuing the pursuit of achieving gender equality in the maritime community.