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WORLD MARITIME DAY 2013 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: IMO'S CONTRIBUTION BEYOND RIO+20

A message from the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization, Mr. Koji Sekimizu

In the future, mankind's development must be able not only to meet the needs of the present, but also allow future generations to meet their own needs. Our development must be sustainable.

The United Nations is taking the global level role in pushing forward efforts to give substance to the concept of sustainable development.

A significant landmark on the road to sustainable development was laid down last year at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) held in Rio de Janeiro, in June, 20 years after the first of such conferences in the same city.

One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop Sustainable Development Goals.

The World Maritime Day theme for 2013 is "Sustainable Development: IMO's contribution beyond Rio+20".

Central to any future development is the global supply chain, the complex mechanism that enables today's inter-dependent, global economy to function. The maritime sector is a vital link in that chain.

As the world's only really reliable, global, cost-effective and energy-efficient mass transportation method for energy, materials, foods and industrial products, maritime transport is central to sustainable development. And the maritime transportation system itself must, therefore, ensure that its development is also sustainable.

I include within this blanket term not just the operation of ships, but all the activities that are vital to support shipping. Activities such as the operation of maritime traffic management systems and global communication systems, ports and multi-modal connections are all components of this multi-faceted sector.

Also, shipbuilding and classification, ship registry and administration, ship finance, ship repairing, ship recycling, the education and training of seafarers, are all part of the system – as, indeed, are search and rescue services, maritime security agencies, coast guards and maritime law enforcement agencies and many others, too. They all have a part to play in defining and achieving a sustainable Maritime Transportation System.

The Maritime Transportation System already contributes significantly to the three pillars of sustainable development – social, environmental and economic. But how do we turn the concept of a sustainable Maritime Transportation System into something tangible? The first step is to identify some broad areas that we need to address if sustainability is to be achieved. Safety; environmental protection; efficient operation; security; and resource conservation are some of the main areas where we will need to focus.

My colleagues and I in the IMO Secretariat are working with industry partners and others on a concept of a sustainable Maritime Transportation System. On World Maritime Day, I will invite interested Member States and organizations to discuss the concept at a symposium.

This initiative will be my own contribution to celebrating this year's World Maritime Day.

And, because the Maritime Transportation System is so essential to the continued development and future growth of the world economy, IMO will continue to take the lead in supporting it with the appropriate global standards and by helping to promote, through technical co-operation, the necessary national maritime transportation policies and institutional frameworks for a sustainable Maritime Transportation System.

Our understanding of sustainable development today embraces a concern both for the capacity of the earth's natural systems, and for the social, economic and cultural challenges faced by humanity.

This year's World Maritime Day theme will highlight the importance of the Maritime Transportation System and provide an opportunity to discuss this matter further.
