

# Safer shipping, cleaner seas

A CELEBRATION OF 75 YEARS OF



**INTERNATIONAL  
MARITIME  
ORGANIZATION**

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Written and compiled by John Barnes, FIMarEST, MRINA

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### Foreword from **KITACK LIM** IMO SECRETARY-GENERAL

This year, IMO celebrates 75 years since the IMO Convention was adopted, setting IMO on its course to ensure maritime safety and security, and to protect the marine environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical challenges have served to increase the world's awareness of its reliance on shipping and seafarers' invaluable role in global trade. Shipping is a truly international industry – which must operate within a framework of global standards.

IMO has developed a comprehensive regulatory framework over seven decades, with more than 50 IMO treaties that have been universally adopted and implemented. These rules cover all aspects of international shipping – from ship design, construction, equipment, to operation and seafarer training as well as prevention of pollution from ships. As shipping evolves, IMO's 175 Member States, along with all stakeholders, work tirelessly to ensure this framework is constantly enhanced and strengthened.

It has long been my intention to publish a book on IMO's history, activities and challenges: past, present and future. So, it gives me great pleasure to write this foreword to IMO's story. Part 1 sets the scene, with the journey to the adoption of the Convention that established IMO (and thereafter). Part 2 describes IMO's work over the decades in maritime safety, security, environment, legal, human element and implementation issues, as well as IMO's efforts to enhance technical cooperation.

Part 3 explains today's IMO, including its organs and the Secretariat. Part 4 touches upon IMO's current and future challenges, including efforts to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), environmental issues, technical developments and people at sea.

This book highlights throughout that the human element is key to safe, secure and environmentally sound operation of ships. The transitions that are currently occurring in the maritime sector, in particular decarbonization, automation and digitalization, place an obligation on all stakeholders to

ensure that these are just and equitable transitions that leave no one behind – with a huge emphasis on technical cooperation and capacity-building activities. There must be a future workforce of maritime professionals who will be able to operate tomorrow's green and smart ships safely and securely.

I would like to thank the renowned maritime journalist Mr. John Barnes, who was commissioned to prepare this book. The content has been overseen and finalized by a Steering Committee, formed in the IMO Secretariat. IMO exists because of its people: I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all delegates who participate in, and contribute to IMO – past, present and future.

This is the first-ever "IMO Book". I hope you will find it interesting and informative. This voyage to establish IMO and through the past 75 years has been made possible thanks to those who have steered and operated the ship. It truly is a voyage together – a journey that will continue towards future safe and clean shipping across all the seas.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Kitack Lim', written in a cursive style.



Message from  
**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES**  
UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL



Seventy-five years ago, the International Maritime Organization was born. Its creation reflected the vital role that shipping plays in the global economy, connecting goods, products, fuel and vital commodities and raw materials to markets around the world, while upholding the highest standards for safety, efficiency and prevention of marine pollution.

With more than 80% of global trade being transported by sea, shipping remains a cornerstone of international economic activity today.

But shipping's fundamental importance is matched by the continued need to adhere to internationally agreed rules, regulations and standards governing this activity.

That's where the IMO comes in. Global rules and standards provide a level playing field across all legal jurisdictions, no matter where ships operate or are owned or built. Through the effective implementation of IMO's instruments, countries receiving ships can be confident in a universal and uniform application of navigation, maritime safety, environmental and training standards.

From the very start, the IMO has represented multilateralism in action – countries coming together for the common benefit of all.

This milestone anniversary is an opportunity to mark this Organization's extraordinary history. But it is also a moment to celebrate its continued role in making sure this vital industry benefits people and planet alike, and that our seas remain secure, safe and protected in the decades to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'António Guterres', is located at the bottom right of the page.

### Introduction from author **JOHN BARNES**



If, when you are in London (United Kingdom), you take a stroll upstream along the south bank of the Thames from Westminster, passing by St. Thomas' Hospital and Lambeth Palace, you will come to a building frequently decked out in a mass of national flags and with what appears to be a ship's bow protruding from its facade, the Seafarers' Memorial. This is the headquarters of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations specialized agency charged with overseeing all matters maritime.

For the last 65 years, following its conception 10 years previously, it has led the way to improve safety at sea, make the world's seas cleaner, and create a more just maritime society. Its path has not always been easy, and it has had to deal with a multitude of problems along the way, but

one thing is clear, without IMO, shipping, the marine environment and the world, would be a less safe and "healthy" place.

This is a celebration of IMO as it turns 75 – it is the story of how it came into being, what it has achieved during its existence, how it functions today and what it sees as the future for the global shipping world. The basis for the functioning of IMO is adoption of mandatory instruments or, in many cases, by consensus. This has been both a strength and a weakness – a strength in that whatever registry a ship has, whatever ocean or sea it operates in, and whatever country or port it visits, it will be subject to the same set of rules and regulations.

However, adoption and consensus require that IMO's conventions are agreed to by a substantial majority of its members before

coming into force and then implemented into national regulations by every member government. This can, and often does, cause some delays in implementation.

Over the years, the Organization has expanded its remit beyond anything the founding countries could have imagined all those years ago. This is highlighted by its history and the range of topics it now covers. Even so, due to reasons of space, there are many aspects that can only be touched upon or not covered at all, for this is a global organization with a global reach.

Finally, the writing of this book could not have been done without the assistance and input of numerous people in the Organization. It is impossible to name everyone but to all I say thank you, while any errors or omissions are solely my responsibility.

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Special recognition

### CHANDRIKA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA



**D**r. CP Srivastava (India) was the longest-serving Secretary-General in the history of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), serving from 1974 to 1989, and accomplished many significant achievements to maritime safety and marine environment protection, including:

- Entry into force of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, which is still the main instrument at IMO, in 1980, introducing tacit acceptance amendment procedure and enabling IMO to quickly respond to technology development; and the adoption of 1988 SOLAS Protocol to incorporate the Harmonized System of Survey and Certification.
- Entry into force of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 (MARPOL Convention) in 1983, by means of adoption of the 1978 Protocol as “MARPOL 73/78”, which is another pillar of instruments at IMO.
- Support for Developing Countries in building their maritime capabilities and capacity, providing technical assistance.
- Establishment of the World Maritime University (WMU) in Malmö, Sweden in 1983, aiming to provide advanced education and research mainly for developing countries.
- Establishment of the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) in Malta in 1988, dedicated to promoting the under-

standing and development of international maritime law.

- Initiative to develop an International Safety Management (ISM) Code, taking into account the need for international standards for the safe management and operation of ships and for pollution prevention, placing a strong emphasis on the importance of the human element on board ships.

Dr. CP Srivastava’s dedication to maritime safety and environmental protection had a lasting impact on the shipping industry. His efforts and initiatives contributed to safer shipping practices, reduced marine pollution, and improved emergency response capabilities, fostering a more sustainable and secure maritime environment.

*“The achievements of the past and the prospects of the future provide grounds for cautious optimism, but they do not justify complacency.”*

**Dr. CP Srivastava**

1920-2013



**PART**  
THE IMO STORY

**1**

*“ The ultimate destination must be reached through uncharted waters; nevertheless, progress is being made ”*

**Mr. William O’Neil**

IMO Secretary-General 1990-2003