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Circular Letter No.4967  
29 January 2025

To: IMO Member States  
United Nations and specialized agencies  
Intergovernmental organizations  
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **2026 IMO Gender Equality Award**

The Council, at its 128th session (C 128), approved a proposal to establish the IMO Gender Equality Award, to accord an international recognition to those individuals, irrespective of their gender, who, either in their personal capacity or as representatives of their respective institutions, have made significant contributions to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in the maritime sector.

The Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization has therefore the honour to invite nominations for the **2026 IMO Gender Equality Award**. As per the Award terms of reference, the Award will be determined by an Assessment Panel and endorsed by the Council.

For this purpose, annex 1 to this circular letter contains the **terms of reference**, as approved by C 128 and amended by C 130. A list of the previous recipients of the Award is attached in annex 2 to this circular letter.

Nominations of candidates to be considered for the 2026 Award should be submitted by completing and signing the **nomination form** attached in annex 3. The **deadline for submission is Monday, 7 July 2025**, and it should be noted that candidatures received after the deadline will not be eligible for consideration.

All nominations should be sent by email to [ero@imo.org](mailto:ero@imo.org) (with "Nomination for the 2026 IMO Gender Equality Award" in the subject line) and/or addressed to:

The Secretary-General  
International Maritime Organization  
4 Albert Embankment  
London SE1 7SR  
United Kingdom

The presentation of the Awards will take place during the celebration of the International Day for Women in Maritime in May 2026.

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## ANNEX 1

### TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE IMO GENDER EQUALITY AWARD

#### Background

1 The International Maritime Organization, as a specialized agency of the United Nations, is strongly committed to the objectives of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, it is committed to promoting policies for achieving those objectives, in particular, SDG 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

2 One of the initiatives carried out by IMO to enhance the participation of women in the maritime industry was the launch of the Gender Programme, now Women in Maritime Programme, in 1988. The programme has highlighted the important role that women play in the maritime sector and the necessity of achieving a fair and equitable maritime sector for all, both men and women.

3 That same year, 1988, the IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) also became a pioneer by entrenching gender policy through the equality in eligibility for any office or appointment in the Institute and its constituent bodies (Article 8 of the Statute).

4 In 2017, IMO adopted the *Strategic Plan for the Organization for the six-year period 2018 to 2023* through resolution A.1110(30), revised by resolution A.1149(32), including a new strategic direction to address the human element. In its aforementioned strategic plan, IMO highlights the importance of addressing human element-related issues within the Organization, while recognizing that the human element is a key element of the safety of life at sea and the protection of the marine environment. One of the IMO principles is to take into account the needs and well-being of seafarers and, in doing so, always attach the utmost importance to education and training, as well as the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

5 In 2019, by resolution A.1147(31) on *Preserving the legacy of the World Maritime Day theme for 2019 and achieving a barrier-free working environment for women in the maritime sector*, the Assembly decided to further promote the goals embraced by the 2019 World Maritime theme through, among others, the development of concrete initiatives on empowering women and advancing gender equality in the Organization and in the wider maritime community.

6 The Council, at its 128th session, approved the proposal to establish the IMO Gender Equality Award, with its terms of reference.

#### Purpose

7 The purpose of the IMO Gender Equality Award is to accord an international recognition to those individuals, irrespective of their gender, who, either in their personal capacity or as representatives of their respective institutions, have made significant contributions to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in the maritime sector.

#### Goal

8 The goal of the Award is to encourage IMO Member States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the industry and persons working in the maritime sector to promote and adopt policies to achieve a working environment that promotes women as equals and ensures they enjoy equal rights and opportunities as their male counterparts.

## **Criteria**

9 Persons, irrespective of their gender and rank, who work in the maritime sector, including governments, industry, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and who have made a verifiable contribution to the empowerment of women in the maritime sector at the national, regional or international level.

10 Examples of actions are, in a non-exhaustive enunciation, the adoption or promotion of measures and policies, regulations or legislation aiming at advancing gender equality; the promotion of positive change as role models; supporting education and training of women in the maritime sector.

## **Nominations**

11 IMO would issue a circular letter to call for nominations. Nominations for the Award may be made by Member States and observer organizations, specialized agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system; intergovernmental organizations with which IMO has established cooperative agreements or arrangements; and non-governmental international organizations in consultative status with IMO. Such nominations should be addressed to the IMO Secretary-General in response to the call for nominations and should provide a detailed description of the achievements of the nominated person.

## **Form of the award**

12 The Award will take the form of a medal, which will be accompanied by a certificate citing the contribution of the winner to improving gender equality in the maritime sector. The Panel may recommend to the Council the granting of Letters of Commendation to those nominees who were not selected for the Award but nevertheless were judged to deserve some form of special recognition for their significant contributions to this field.

13 The recipient will be invited to write a short article highlighting the challenges faced in the implementation or development of initiative/s as a contribution to an inclusive maritime culture, as well as positive outcomes. The IMO Secretariat will subsequently translate the article into the IMO official languages as a document of the Council.

14 If the winner agrees to submit an article, the IMO Outreach and Communications Office (OCO), International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) and the World Maritime University (WMU) will be invited to give publicity to it on their respective websites.

## **Assessment Panel**

15 Nominations for the Award will be evaluated by an Assessment Panel composed of the IMO Secretary-General or a nominee of the IMO Secretary-General, as Chair of the Panel, together with experts nominated by:

- .1 two representatives of IMO Member States who are Members of the IMOGENder Network;
- .2 one representative each for the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA International);
- .3 one representative of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO) and the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), on a rotational basis (one for each calendar year); and
- .4 one representative from the Chair/Vice-Chair of the Council or of any of the Committees among those who are women.

16 The members of the Panel will be appointed by the IMO Secretary-General and will serve for one year in their personal and expert capacity and not as representatives of organizations or States nominating them.

17 The function of the Assessment Panel will be to review the nominations for the Award received, taking into account the Award's purpose and criteria vis-à-vis the description of the factual circumstances giving rise to the nomination and the related supporting documentation. The Panel will select one winner.

18 The IMO Secretariat will provide the necessary administrative support.

19 The Council will be invited to endorse the outcome of the Assessment Panel.

### **Award ceremony**

20 The IMO Gender Equality Award will be presented by the Secretary-General at IMO Headquarters on the occasion of the annual commemoration of the International Day for Women in Maritime.

### **Timetable**

21 Every effort should be made to ensure that a timetable along the following lines, leading to the Award ceremony, be observed:

- Circular letter inviting nominations
- Deadline for receipt of nominations
- Review by Assessment Panel
- Council is invited to endorse the outcome of the Assessment Panel
- Notification of recipient and press release
- Award ceremony – International Day for Women in Maritime

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**ANNEX 2**

**PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS OF THE IMO GENDER EQUALITY AWARD**

- 2024 Ms. Despina Panayiotou Theodosiou (Cyprus)
- 2025 Ms. Karin Orsel (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
- 2026 The recipient of the Award will be decided at C 135 in November 2025

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**ANNEX 3**

**NOMINATION OF CANDIDATE FOR  
THE 2026 IMO GENDER EQUALITY AWARD**

**The Government of** .....  
(Name of country)

or

**The** .....  
(Name of organization)

hereby nominates (name, title and nationality of candidate to be inserted)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

for the **2026 IMO Gender Equality Award**

For, and on behalf of, **the Government of** .....

or **(name of organization)** .....

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Name: .....

Designation: .....

Official seal (where appropriate):

## DESCRIPTION OF CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY

In accordance with the terms of reference for the IMO Gender Equality Award, the candidature of **[nominee]** ..... is supported by the following description of the circumstances giving rise to the nomination.

- 1      **Provide a narrative description of not more than three pages** of the significant contributions made by the nominee to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in the maritime sector. Examples of contributions are, in a non-exhaustive enunciation: the adoption or promotion of measures and policies, regulations or legislation aiming at advancing gender equality, the promotion of positive change as role models, supporting education and training of women in the maritime sector, etc.
  
  - 2      **Provide any other information, including audiovisual materials, supporting the nomination.**
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