

“Development for a New World Maritime Community”

**Speech by IAMU Honorary Chair, Yohei Sasakawa
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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am greatly honored to be here today at the 7th General Assembly of the International Association of Maritime Universities. As we all know, this general assembly has been organized by President Wang and his staff at Dalian Maritime University, and Chairperson Rear Admiral Leonard Tyler and his staff at the IAMU Secretary’s Office, who all worked hard and with great enthusiasm. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those involved.

Human life has been closely connected with the sea since the beginning of history, but it was in the second half of the 20th century that worldwide maritime transportation developed most dramatically. It is now an essential means of global logistics, supporting our lives and the development of our countries.

About 90% of world trade is by sea, which means that maritime transportation is a major factor of globalization which drives the world economy.

On the other hand the expansion of maritime transportation has also brought various problems with it. We have developed our port facilities and established new sea routes. But at the same time, there has been a rise in marine accidents, including oil spills and the pollution of the sea and coastal areas. These, in turn, have brought adverse effects on human health and marine ecosystems. The ever-increasing amount of pollution has moved well beyond the self-cleaning capacity of the sea. The sea was once believed to have virtually unlimited capacity for use by human beings. However, it has turned out to be very fragile. Moreover, its development and exploitation now threaten the very basis of our lives.

In order to cope with such crises, we need to do more than just use the sea. We need to move toward protecting it. We need to adapt ourselves to its changes. Since the maritime community’s activities are such a large part of the human use of the sea, it is crucial for us to review our own behavior, and make appropriate changes in the way we treat the sea.

Under the leadership of the International Maritime Organization the maritime community has been working together in many ways, such as the development of international regulations. This system has produced significant improvements in

maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment.

However, we are now facing the emergence of new challenges that defy the conventional way of handling problems on a case-by-case basis. Such problems include environmental damage, and the inadequate management of ships throughout their life cycle. Both of these have been brought to light by the question of how we dismantle and scrap our ships. We also need to find ways to deal with the disruption of transportation caused by marine accidents, as well as piracy and terrorism in internationally vital sea lanes such as the Strait of Malacca. More needs to be done to deal with these problems. Yet another area that requires further effort is one of your university's main themes: a seafarer-centered safety management framework for the international shipping industry.

However, efforts based on conventional methods and procedures are insufficient to deal with such issues.

In June of last year, the IMO invited me to speak to delegations from around the world. I took that opportunity to propose a new concept: "the sustainable development of maritime activities." This concept is a framework for the coexistence of mankind and the sea. Globalization has been accompanied by rapid internationalization and multi-nationalization of maritime activities and problems. I came up with this concept on the basis of my view that, in order to achieve coexistence with the sea, in order to solve emerging issues related to the sea, we need to reform the traditional system of the maritime community, in which each government basically acts as an individual.

For this new framework, we need to achieve a form of international cooperation whereby nongovernmental maritime organizations and the IMO and governments support each other as they reform maritime policy together.

In order to maintain harmony between the marine environment and our maritime activities, and to tackle issues against which conventional systems and methods are inadequate, we need to grasp the overall picture of the maritime community and its activities. We need to work so that all stakeholders approach the issue of coexistence of mankind and the sea from their own viewpoints, but in a responsible manner. To effectively address the relationship between the sea and mankind, we need to discuss maritime responsibility in a comprehensive and cross-disciplinary manner. A key step in developing a new maritime community will be the nurturing of human resources capable of dealing with the many difficult challenges that we face.

As we develop the required human resources, one crucial group will be our seafarers. However, in this area, there are many problems, and this is of central concern for all of us here.

It is said that without the contribution of seafarers, half of the world would freeze and

the other half would starve. This underscores the important role of these people who work on the frontlines of maritime transportation.

However, the increase in the number of high-tech ships, such as advanced LNG carriers, has highlighted the global need to improve the technical skills not only of seafarers but also of the personnel engaged in the safe management of vessel navigation.

Each country trains seafarers using its own maritime education and training system and sends them out to work together with seafarers from other countries. Each country's level of maritime education and training system is different, and so it is necessary to develop an international standard for safe operational skills. There is an urgent need to ensure not only a high level of education, but also a uniform curriculum for all students. We need to not only introduce the latest information-communications technologies for managing ship safety, but equally importantly, we must develop human resources capable of using them.

The IAMU was established to tackle precisely such issues by improving the level of higher maritime education under a common curriculum. The IAMU's work to improve the competence of LNG seafarers, its academic analysis and studies of maritime English, and other wide-ranging and original educational activities have received worldwide acclaim and led to the IMO granting it NGO status. The IAMU is expected to take the initiative in ensuring a high level of human resource development and international standards for seafarers.

At the same time though, I feel that the IAMU has a number of issues that it needs to address if it is to live up to such expectations.

According to IMO, about 80% or more of marine accidents can be attributed to human error. Amid the global shortage of seafarers, contemporary maritime education seems to place excessive emphasis on cramming students with inadequate knowledge and skills required to operate ships. What this does is to produce seafarers who lack pride in their work, and do not possess a true seaman's spirit. In this respect, I wonder whether the IAMU needs to review the balance of its study themes. I also think that the IAMU needs to make more effort to ensure that the knowledge and skills of seafarers are utilized more effectively by the maritime community at large.

Most IAMU universities are national institutions. This means that you are bound by the laws and certification systems of your respective countries. So it may be difficult to respond quickly to issues facing the maritime community on the international level. But maritime universities are expected to play an important role in developing human resources not only at home, but for the global maritime community as a whole. You are expected to fulfill the roles and responsibilities as an influential body in the maritime community.

I believe that the development of well-balanced and highly qualified seafarers is possible only if they are taught the pride and philosophy of being a seafarer, not just the skills and knowledge necessary for safe vessel operation. In addition, to nurture and utilize seafarers who will continue to support the development of the new maritime community, we need to review and raise the standards of the conventional maritime education system. We need to develop a new systematic, integrated curriculum. One that includes comprehensive education about the sea. One that encompasses such fields as marine environment, maritime administration and policy, international law and safety management. This new curriculum will play a key role in developing a new maritime community.

So what can the IAMU do to bring about this necessary change? It can provide a new forum which will allow universities to engage in transnational activities, transcending national borders and controls. This is where the IAMU can make a real contribution.

I encourage you to continue your efforts to develop the human resources that can make contributions to the global maritime community. People who can respond to changes beyond the confines of states. People whose actions will be based in a passion for the sea, rooted in the world's greatest maritime wisdom and guided by a commitment to a peaceful life. These are already ideals shared by you all.

The development of human resources is the first step in the development of a new maritime community. I think that, together with the efforts of the IMO and all governments, the IAMU is an ideal platform where maritime universities from different countries can cooperate in a global network. Here, we will develop a voluntary and creative framework. Through this structure, we will actively contribute to the maritime community, identifying new maritime activities. We will develop appropriate ways of human resource development, outside the conventional methods and notions. The Nippon Foundation is more than happy to support such positive and active efforts.

China has made remarkable strides in its economic development, particularly since the beginning of this century. In this, Dalian Maritime University has been playing an important role by helping to provide highly qualified human resources for the Chinese shipping industry, which is essential to the economic development of the country. By sponsoring this general assembly, the university is taking an even bigger step forward in this field. For this, I offer my congratulations. I hope that all participants here will view this general assembly as an opportunity, both to reaffirm the progress that the IAMU has made to this point, and to help further its future activities. Together, let us create the changes needed for the development of a new maritime community.

Thank You.

