International Maritime Information

The 23rd IMO Assembly

By Kei Tanaka
Director General, Japan Ship Centre

WMU graduates playing important roles at IMO Assembly

The 23rd session of the IMO Assembly was held from 24 November to 5 December 2003. It was noted that many graduates from WMU including Sasakawa Fellows also made positive contributions to the proceedings.

Admiral E. Mitropoulos of Greece was unanimously approved as the next Secretary-General of the IMO, and many significant Assembly Resolutions were adopted, such as:

- IMO Guidelines on Ship Recycling
- IMO Policies and Practices related to the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Ships
- Guidelines on Places of Refuge for Ships in Need of Assistance

MEPC50, which was held from December 1 to 4, tackled legislative matters related to the oil tanker Prestige incident, which occurred on the west coast of Spain. As a result of constructive discussion at this meeting, a new universal rule on oil tankers was adopted, relating to the phase-out and survey regime of Single Hull tankers.

On December 2, five Sasakawa Fellows and Japanese participants in the Assembly met and renewed their old friendship over an Indian lunch. They had a very enjoyable time talking about the major topics at this Assembly and cultural matters, as well as catching up on how they have all been getting along in recent years.

What made a get-together like this possible were the efforts of the Secretariat of "Friends of WMU, Japan" at SOF who were quick to find Sasakawa Fellows from among the participants in the recent session and advise us to contact them. Two Sasakawa Fellows - diplomats stationed in London - Mr. Heru Prasetyo (1992) of Indonesia and Ms. Xu Cuiming (1996) of China helped organize the get-together. My proposal in connection to this is that the Sasakawa Fellow who will be attending IMO meetings contact the Secretariat of the "Friends" beforehand. In this way, the Secretariat can make the necessary arrangements for a reunion or other get-together for the fellows.

WMU graduates are playing a much more important role in maritime matters than ever before, particularly through IMO related activities. And this Assembly was a good opportunity to recognise this. Thus it is to be expected that all Sasakawa Fellows of the WMU will become key players in the field of maintaining safety and security at sea, preserving the marine environment, and promoting sound shipping. The future is in your hands!

IMO guidelines on ship recycling were adopted

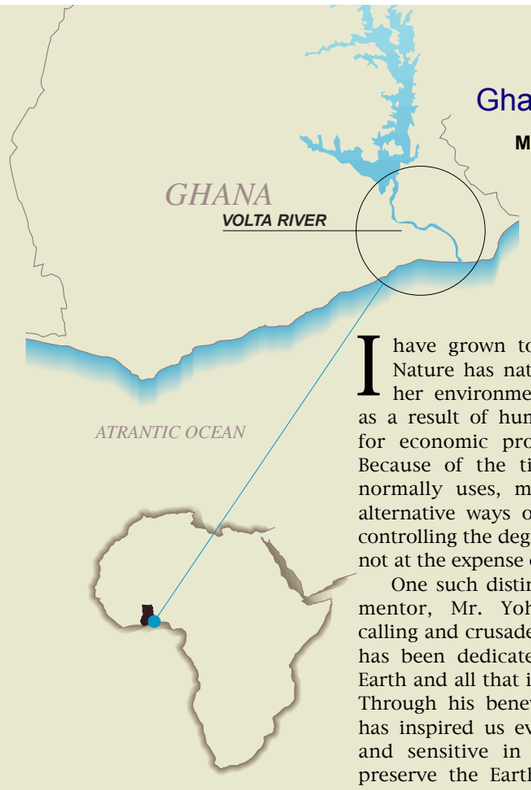
Responding to the growing concerns about environment, safety and health matters in the ship recycling industries, IMO started discussions on enhancement of vicious ship recycling practices from March 2000. As an outcome, Assembly Resolution 962(23) on IMO Guidelines on Ship Recycling was adopted in December 2003, which offers advice to all stake holders in the recycling process, including shipowners, shipbuilders and recycling yards.

In the Guidelines, the term “ship recycling” is used instead of “ship scrapping,” because virtually nothing goes to waste in the process. It is also noted that the industry makes a positive contribution to the global environment, if properly handled.

Basic principles of the Guidelines are identification of potentially hazardous materials in ships and minimization of hazardous substances. It is difficult to mention everything in this limited space, but the main ideas of the Guidelines are:

1. Shipbuilders and manufacturers of marine equipment should be aware of the need to minimize hazardous substances used in new ships and their equipment and to create designs that facilitate removal of hazardous materials.
2. Shipowners (and shipbuilders) should prepare a Green Passport, which describes where and how much the potentially hazardous materials are used in the ship, and keep it updated.
3. Recycling facilities should have a capability to recycle ships, and competent authorities in Recycling States should assess the capabilities of facilities and make the results available.
4. The last owner of a ship sold for recycling should, consistent with the safe operation of a ship, remove or minimize potentially hazardous materials from the ship and should provide the recycling facilities with the Green Passport.
5. Recycling facilities, in consultation with the shipowner, should develop a Ship Recycling Plan.

Essay



Ghana’s River Volta

Ms. Felicity Ankoma-Sey
(Ghana 2001)

I have grown to believe that Mother Nature has natural ways of repairing her environment that gets degraded as a result of humans’ unending search for economic prosperity and comfort. Because of the time frame which she normally uses, man continues to find alternative ways of restoring or quickly controlling the degraded environment but not at the expense of economic activity.

One such distinguished person is our mentor, Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, whose calling and crusade amongst other things, has been dedicated towards preserving Earth and all that it has from destruction. Through his benevolence, Mr. Sasakawa has inspired us even more to be caring and sensitive in joining the quest to preserve the Earth’s rich and beautiful resources amongst developing economic activity. This cause can be pretty difficult and fruitless if it is tackled on an individual basis. I am therefore privileged to be a member of ‘Friends of WMU’, a distinguished association made of international intellectuals who can share their experiences and expertise for the common interest of preserving Earth whilst promoting economic activity.

Mother Nature has blessed Ghana with the River Volta. It lies on the eastern part of the country and stretches from the coast to the north, covering about three-quarters of the total length of the country. It is used amongst other things for irrigation, aquaculture, hydroelectric power generation and transportation. Though all these economic activities are very important to Ghana, my interest is transportation. I have two concerns:

First, the River Volta provides the nation with easy assess to the landlocked West African countries. Ghana’s corridors, which are already highly rated, could gain even higher competitive advantage over its neighboring countries in providing logistics services if the potential of this gold mine is seriously tapped. This would support Ghana’s vision of becoming the gateway to West Africa.

Presently the transport services along the river are used for the movement of oil/oil products to the north, as well as transporting foodstuffs from the hinterland to urban areas. Statistics show that this mode carries only 9% of Ghana’s cargo traffic. I am looking forward to the day when containers can be moved to and from the hinterland using this service, and also when the tourism potential of the river can be boosted.

Secondly, over the years, statistics have shown that the maximum water level of the river has a pattern of steady decline. The foundations of some dolphins along the riverbanks, which were completely submerged, can now be clearly seen. In some months of the year, some parts of the river are not navigable even though vessels with very shallow drafts are used. Could this be due to environmental factors and human activities? For example, the source of this river lies in neighboring Burkina Faso. This source in recent years has been dammed at a point to serve irrigation and other purposes. My personal fear is that if nothing is done in due course to save the river, the generation of my children’s children may learn about this beautiful river in history books.

Further research in these areas is yet to be undertaken to explore the potential of this river. Your countries' experiences, as well as suggestions, would be much appreciated. Matters of major interest include government policies and international laws governing the use of inland water bodies running through more than one country, environmental issues, and nature of transport/trade on inland water bodies. These may go a long way to help restore the river and boost trade. They may also serve as good lessons for ‘Friends’ in other countries who are facing similar problems. Please contribute to this topic in the next or coming editions of the newsletter.