Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be here today and I am delighted to be able to participate in this Conference on a subject that is crucial for the future of shipping and very close to my heart. Let me first thank the Organizers of this important Conference, namely The Company of Master Mariners of Canada and the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada, and in particular Captain James Parsons, for convening this event and for inviting me to give the Key Note Address and thus allowing me to set the scene. As a former seafarer myself and someone who has spent his entire professional life involved, in one way or another, with all matters maritime, I speak as one for whom the attractiveness of the maritime and ancillary professions needs no enhancement. However, being a realist, I do recognize that not everyone may share my enthusiasm. So, anything I can do to help shed light on this matter and to encourage positive discussions on it is, I think, a very worthwhile use of my time – and yours.

Let me begin with some basic but non-the-less interesting facts: In today’s global economy, hundreds of millions of people all over the world rely on ships to transport the great multitude of commodities, fuel, foodstuffs, goods and products on which we all depend. Yet, for most of them, shipping, not to mention the huge range of related maritime activities that, together, go to make up what is loosely termed “the shipping industry”, does not register a particularly strong echo on their personal radar. The very nature of shipping makes it something of a “background” industry. For most people, most of the time, ships are simply “out of sight and out of mind”.

And the same, as a consequence, can be said of the seafarers that operate the world’s fleet, despite the fact that the global economy depends utterly on their presence. Seafarers are, in effect, the lubricant without which the engine of trade would simply grind to a halt.

It is, of course, sad when workforces are unrecognized and more or less taken for granted. When, for example, we switch on a light, we do not, generally, pause to think of all those who have laboured in the various sectors of the oil exploration and production process and, subsequently, in power generation and transmission industries to make it happen. Nor, when we sit at the table to eat our daily bread, do we pause to think of who brought the grain that enabled our local baker to bake it. Nor when, faced with a severe winter, do we pause to think of who carried, from its sources afar, the oil that heats our homes or fuels the energy on which we all so much depend these days. Well, perhaps we should; and we certainly should not use that as an excuse to continue to allow the seafarer, who helps these happen, to be ignored at best, and poorly treated at worst.

Seafaring is a difficult and demanding job, with its own set of unique pressures and risks. At the end of a long and stressful day, there is no return home to the family; no evening with friends at the taverna or the pub; no change of scenery; no chance to properly relax, unwind
or de-stress. Just the relentless drone of the diesels and the never-ending movement of the vessel that is not only the seafarers' place of work but also their home, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for weeks and often for months on end; and, ever-present in the back of their mind, the possibility of natural and other, invidious hazards such as pirate attacks, unwarranted detention and abandonment in foreign ports.

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In this, the **Year of the Seafarer**, our intention has been not only to draw attention to the unique circumstances within which seafarers spend their working lives, while rendering their indispensable services, but also to make a palpable and beneficial difference.

In selecting the **“Year of the Seafarer”** theme, our intention was also to use it as an excellent opportunity to reassure those, who labour at the “sharp end” of the industry – the seafarers themselves – that those of us who work in other areas of the maritime community, and yet whose actions have a direct bearing on seafarers’ everyday lives, understand the extreme pressures they face and approach our tasks with genuine interest and concern for them and their families.

In this respect, the most significant achievement of the year undoubtedly came in June, with the adoption, by a Diplomatic Conference in Manila, of major revisions to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers – the STCW Convention – and its associated Code. Scheduled to enter into force on 1 January 2012, these revisions will ensure that the necessary global standards will be in place to train and certify seafarers to operate technologically advanced ships for some time to come.

The Manila Conference also agreed a series of new provisions on the issue of “fitness for duty - hours of rest”, to provide watchkeepers aboard ships with sufficient rest periods. This important new provision will create better conditions for seafarers and help ensure they are adequately rested before they undertake their duties. Fatigue has been found to be a contributory factor to several accidents at sea and to ensure that seafarers are adequately rested before they take over their watch will certainly play an important role in safe sailing and the prevention of casualties. We are particularly pleased that the new STCW requirements on this crucial issue are consistent with the corresponding provisions of the International Labour Organization’s 2006 Maritime Labour Convention, which we hope will come into force soon.

While the amendments to the STCW Convention and Code and the resolutions adopted by the Manila Conference can rightly be considered as the pinnacle of our regulatory efforts this year to create a better, safer and more secure world in which seafarers can operate, other efforts continue in parallel; because, at IMO, the human element and the interests of seafarers’ work and life on board are always at the forefront of all our legislative work.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

This particular audience present here today is most acutely aware that fishing is a global industry that operates in open seas often under very adverse weather and sea condition and it also interacts with many other maritime industries. Hence it is a very important industry globally and for this part of the world in particular. It is therefore important that internationally agreed training standards are used for training and certification of crew manning and operating fishing vessels.

Presently, it is estimated that annually more than 24,000 lives are lost world wide during fishing operations which is a most deploring record indeed. The implementation of the
International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), which was adopted by IMO in 1995, is expected to bring considerable benefits and advantages to the fishing industry i.e. improving the quality of education and training provided to personnel employed in fishing vessels; and enhancing the standard of safety in the fishing industry and fishing vessel fleets. I am sure that this will contribute to the reduction of casualties, and will go a long way to improve the present poor safety record of the global fishing industry. When it comes into force, the STCW-F will apply to crew onboard seagoing fishing vessels of 24 metres in length and above. It sets the regulatory framework for the training and certification of personnel employed on board fishing vessels with a view to improve the safety of life and property at sea in the fishing industry. This is the first attempt to establish international mandatory training standards for crew manning and operating fishing vessels and we all hope that it will indeed have the desired impact and effect. However, it is important to note and bear in mind that the STCW-F does not deal actually with manning issues as such, which is crucial and should make ratification and implementation easier for all concerned.

I am pleased to report that currently we have received 14 ratifications of the Convention vis-a-vis the 15 which are needed to meet the entry into force conditions. That means that we need only one more ratification and 12 months thereafter the Convention will enter into force as the global international standard. Canada has ratified the Convention and should be commended for that and for implementing it rigorously.

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When IMO first mooted the idea that our theme for 2010 should focus on “the seafarer”, we wanted to do two things; first, we wanted to draw attention to a workforce that is largely unheralded and unacknowledged, often even within the industry it serves: and, second, we wanted to extend the theme beyond the regular World Maritime Day celebrations and to galvanize a momentum that would last for the whole year and, indeed, beyond. We wanted 2010 to be the start of this momentum; but we certainly do not want the end of 2010 to be the end of the initiative.

To this end, we welcomed and embraced enthusiastically the decision of the Manila Conference that the unique contribution made by seafarers from all over the world to international seaborne trade, the world economy and civil society as a whole, should, from now on, be marked annually with a “Day of the Seafarer”, to be held on 25 June of each year. The date chosen was that on which the Conference was concluded and acknowledges the significance of the STCW amendments then adopted for the maritime community and those who serve it on board ships. And we would warmly encourage Governments, shipping organizations, companies, owners, operators, managers and all other parties concerned to promote the Day of the Seafarer.

Earlier in the year, the Secretary-General identified three targets that he would be happy to see achieved in conjunction with our “Year of the Seafarer” initiative. They were:

- **one**, increased awareness among the general public of the indispensable services seafarers render to civil society at large;

- **two**, a clear message to seafarers that we recognize and appreciate their services; that we do care about them; and that we do all that we can to look after and protect them when the circumstances of their life at sea so warrant; and

- **three**, redoubled efforts at the regulatory level to move from words to deeds to create a better world in which seafarers can offer their services.
I think we can safely say that, so far, good progress has been made towards achieving all three of the set objectives. It is, therefore, very pleasing to see that the theme, which was selected in order to act as the focal point around which the maritime community as a whole would rally to seek ways to recognize and pay tribute to seafarers for their unique contribution to society and the vital part they play in the facilitation of global trade, has achieved, and is achieving, its aim. This has undoubtedly been happening and there have been numerous manifestations of this from all over the world.

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The “Year of the Seafarer” has also helped to re-focus attention on the pressing need for the shipping industry to come to grips with the long-predicted labour-supply shortage in the shipping industry – a shortage that may have been temporarily alleviated by the recent downturn in global trade but which, nevertheless, remains ever-present. In this context, the “Year of the Seafarer” has added valuable impetus to the “Go to Sea” campaign, which we launched at IMO in November 2008, in association with ILO, the “Round Table” of shipping industry associations and the International Transport Workers’ Federation.

The campaign calls on governments, industry and IMO to take specific actions, within their areas of influence, to increase the recruitment of seafarers to tackle the problem.

Amongst the specific calls for action, the shipping industry is urged to take the lead and do more to promote itself through the media. The industry should continue to provide support for and endorse campaigns aimed at improving its image and use key industry figures as examples of career progression. It is also urged to do more to make life on board and away from home more akin to the life enjoyed by others ashore; to encourage women to work in the seafaring profession; and to promote the industry at non-maritime-related events.

Governments are asked to give greater prominence to the maritime perspective, by doing more to support and encourage the shipping industry in any initiatives it takes to enhance its image and to remove adverse actions that may damage that image. Maritime training facilities need to be resourced adequately (both in financial and human resource terms) to ensure a supply of competent seafarers. Governments could do much to promote a wider take-up of a sea career through, for example, recognition of sea service instead of compulsory military service, training of jobless persons and promoting the sea as a career for women.

We at IMO have developed a page on our public website highlighting information about the types of career paths available to seafarers, through links to industry sites. While on missions abroad, where practicable, we visit maritime and non-maritime training facilities and seafarer organizations to express support and address both maritime and non-maritime Government departments to promote shipping and seafaring.

We considered the “Go to Sea!” campaign to be necessary because if shipping is to continue to serve global trade, while maintaining and improving standards, it cannot afford to ignore the current shortage of good entrants to the industry. It has been widely predicted that, unless something is done rapidly, shipping will soon face a manpower crisis; there simply will not be enough properly qualified officers to run a world fleet that continues to increase in size.

There is clear evidence that today, not enough young people, particularly in the western hemisphere, seem to find seafaring an attractive and appealing career and the industry cannot afford to ignore the current shortage of good entrants. It is imperative that shipping finds a way to re-launch itself as a career of choice for the high-calibre, high-quality young people of today.
The BIMCO/ISF Manpower Updates, first conducted in 1990, are regarded as the most comprehensive assessment of global supply of, and demand for, seafarers. The most recent one was published in 2005 and, worryingly, revealed a continuing shortage of qualified officers, projected to rise, by 2015, to around 27,000 in number or 5.9 per cent of the total workforce, along with a significant surplus of ratings.

However, it concluded that, in practice, the overall officer shortfall was probably more problematic than the data might suggested, bearing in mind the obstacles preventing surpluses of some nationalities from compensating shortages elsewhere. The barriers identified included cultural and language differences, lack of international experience and seafarer nationality restrictions imposed by some flags.

BIMCO and ISF have concluded that now, more than ever, current economic difficulties facing the industry and the increasing pressures being placed on seafarers, such as piracy and criminalization, make it timely to conduct a new survey to identify what needs to be put in place for the future to secure a healthy pool of seafarers in the short, medium and long term. We expect the 2010 BIMCO/ISF Manpower Update to be published towards the end of this year and the entire shipping community is awaiting its results with keen interest.

I think we can safely say, that despite the numerical decline in officer-level entrants, shipping remains an exciting, rewarding and fulfilling career – a career that can take people almost anywhere, both in geographical terms and in terms of the sort of work they may finally find themselves doing.

Seafaring is not only a satisfying and worthwhile career choice in itself, it is also a passport to a huge variety of related jobs ashore for which experience at sea will make one eminently qualified. Indeed, there now seems to be a greater awareness that, after a seagoing career in a responsible and demanding job, there are many opportunities ashore in related industries that rely on the skills and knowledge of those with seafaring expertise. This is something the industry and its supporters need to stress.

The many dedicated professional seafarers who, having served their early years at sea, now hold positions as managers and superintendents in shipping companies, maritime pilots, VTS and rescue coordination centres’ operators, advisers to Ministers and executives in shipping-related activities (such as insurance companies and classification societies, professors and teachers at maritime academies and colleges), scattered throughout all parts of the industry, are shining examples of what can be achieved – not to mention those shipmasters and engineers who have become shipowners themselves.

No doubt, to a certain extent, the unique hazards confronting seafarers – pirate attacks, unwarranted detention and abandonment, to reiterate some of them – serve to discourage new recruits. Yet, despite the challenges it presents – or perhaps because of them – time spent at sea offers a series of enticing advantages and unique opportunities. The potential for good wages, early responsibility, opportunities to travel, good long-term career prospects, long holidays and the sense of doing something very different from just working in an office, have a universal and timeless appeal to many young people embarking on a career.

That is why we at IMO believe that any initiatives to boost the image of the shipping industry and to support cadet recruitment, including the recruiting of female cadets, should be welcomed and encouraged.

It is certainly true that developing countries have broken through the old officer/crew barrier now, and today it is by no means unusual to find competent and experienced officers from outside the traditional shipping nations in charge of the most modern vessels. As the industry
looks to enhance its attractiveness, it is in these newer markets, I believe, that its efforts are most likely to bear fruit.

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I should like to conclude by using the opportunity of this keynote address to communicate with a few segments of the community – especially those within and in the periphery of the shipping industry. This is what we would like to tell them, using the Secretary-General’s words in his World Maritime Day message:

- **to members of the shipping industry:** maintain high standards; enshrine best practices; embrace corporate social responsibility; provide a clean, safe and comforting workplace; recognize and reward those on whose labours your profits depend;

- **to politicians:** work towards the ratification, entry into force and implementation of all the international measures that have a bearing on seafarers’ safety, security and living and working conditions; show that you do care for the people at the sharp end;

- **to legislators and law enforcers:** aim at striking a fair balance in all of your actions concerning seafarers so that they do not become scapegoats caught up in the aftermath of accidents and incidents; treat them fairly and decently – they deserve every empathy and compassion;

- **to educators:** tell the younger generations about seafaring, the debt we owe to shipping and the attractions of the maritime professions; it should not take too much imagination to stir maritime ingredients into the learning pot through history, geography, biology, environmental studies, economics, business studies and others;

- **to port and immigration authorities:** treat seafarers with the respect they deserve; welcome them as visitors and guests to your countries—as professionals that are also serving the interests and development of your nations and fellow citizens;

- **to those in a position to shape and influence public opinion,** particularly newspaper and TV journalists: take the time and trouble to seek out both sides of the story next time you report on an accident involving a ship; place the accident in its proper context, that of millions upon millions of tonnes of cargo safely delivered over billions of miles to all four corners of the earth by a talented, highly trained, highly specialized and highly dedicated workforce;

- and, finally, **to the 1.5 million seafarers** of the world, we should like to convey this message: the entire maritime community appreciates you and your indispensable services; is aware of the conditions under which you operate; shows compassion for the sacrifices you make; does care for you; and works to ensure your safety and security, praying that you always have calm seas, fair winds and a safe return home – which it wishes you wholeheartedly.

Before I conclude, I would like to once again thank The Company of Master Mariners of Canada and the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada, and in particular Captain James Parsons, for organising this most timely and topical Conference and for enabling me to again visit this great country and this beautiful city of St. John’s.

Thank you

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