



1ST MARITIME SAFETY WORKSHOP Inaugural Ceremony

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Mr. Paul “Chip” Jaenichen, Acting Administrator, U.S., Maritime Administration (MARAD), Ambassadors and Alternate Representatives of the Permanent Missions to the Organization of American States, Representatives of the Port Authorities of OAS Member States, Special Guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning and warm welcome to the Organization of American States. It is my pleasure, jointly with Mr. Jaenichen, to inaugurate this First Maritime Safety Workshop. The Workshop’s main objective is to strengthen institutional capabilities in Maritime Safety of OAS Member Countries through the provision of high quality training and exposure to successful practices to selected applicants.

It is important to note that this Workshop is organized, on one hand, following the theme of President Obama’s April, 2009, speech at the Summit of the Americas, and the subsequent Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) Partnership launched in May, 2010 to help develop the ability of the Caribbean to address common and related challenges. Safety and security capacity-building is an example of these challenges, particularly in preparation for the Panama Canal expansion.

On the other, it is in direct response to one of the six priority areas of the Plan of Action of Cartagena, approved by the Inter-American Committee on Ports of the OAS last September in Colombia during its most recent meeting. These priority areas are: Logistics, Innovation and Competitiveness; Sustainable Management and Environmental Protection; public Policy, Legislation and Regulation; Tourism, Inland Ports, Ship Services and navigation Safety, Corporate Social Responsibility and Women in Ports; and, of course, Port Protection and Safety, which is the reason for us being here.

Why is the issue of maritime safety important to us? The fact that the maritime industry and ports are the main nodes in the global physical network of shipping that manages more than 80 % of goods worldwide, should be enough to warrant close attention to this most important issue.

The Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP for its Spanish acronym) recognizes that in the context of an increasingly globalized economy, ports and the maritime industry contribute significantly to sustainable economic development and social equity and welfare. Together with a network of efficient transport, ships and ports are prerequisite for social inclusion in the main economic activities and access to services.

The development of a safe, sustainable, and competitive maritime and ports sectors in the Americas has an impact on the trade and the socio-economic development of OAS member states and is a prerequisite for social inclusion in mainstream activities economic, promoting social welfare and contributing to the strengthening of democracy.



The topic of maritime safety is a cross-cutting theme that affects all maritime and port endeavors and it has the potential of negatively affecting the competitiveness of not only a port but a country. It is vital for the protection of workers in both ports and ships in the loading and off-loading of goods, but also for those in related service industries. An accident at work due to inadequate safety measures or policies might result, not only in physical harm to the workers, but a loss in productivity and possibly increased costs from its aftermath. Alternatively, an accident at sea resulting in an oil spill from a platform or a tanker, for instance, spells not only enormous monetary and human losses but also an environmental catastrophe that cannot be quantified.

Likewise appropriate safety guidelines are needed in Cruise and port operations that incorporate everything from food and water to boarding, safety on deck or loading fuel and disposing of waste and residues, just to name a few key areas.

In all cases, effective safety policies and directives are needed, not only to deal with accidents and mishaps, but, perhaps more importantly, to prevent them.

In this context, this Workshop will provide you, the directors of maritime and or port safety of your respective countries and other special guests, with presentations of the highest level on diverse safety topics by renowned experts in the field. These include safety culture, safety initiatives, environmental challenges in ports, maritime accidents, investigative procedures, lessons learned from recent cruise accidents, hazardous materials, and law enforcement and security, among others.

While we are certain that the speakers and the content provides an excellent basis, for the Workshop to be truly successful, we require of your participation and input. For this purpose, I encourage you to take advantage of the Q&A sessions after each presentation and, do remember that Wednesday morning is dedicated to your own presentations so that we may learn from you as well.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that improved maritime and port development in a holistic way, is a necessary condition for achieving sustainable economic development and social welfare of the region, and that an integral part of that development is based on safety.

I also want to remind you of our strong commitment to support the work of the CIP Secretariat to continue promoting the exchange of successful experiences from the region to leverage our complementarities, and build greater synergies and collaboration. In this context, let me remind you that the CIP Secretariat is organizing a series of events this year in several of the six priority areas I mentioned before, including Dredging and Buoying, Corporate Social Responsibility in the Port Sector, Port Legislation and Policies and Competitiveness and Logistics.

Of the utmost importance, however, will be the organization of the Ninth Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Ports this June 18 to 20 here at OAS Headquarters, where we expect representatives of the Port Authorities of all 34 OAS member States to discuss new ways of collaboration and strategies for the continued implementation of the Plan of Action of Cartagena.



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Before I finish, I would like to express our gratitude to the US Department of State and the US Permanent Mission to the OAS for their generous support for this Workshop and also to the US Maritime Administration's Office of International Activities and the Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Ports for its organization.

I wish you all a very productive Workshop
Thank you very much.