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

Subject: **Passing of Mr. William O'Neil, IMO Secretary-General Emeritus**

It is with great sadness that the Secretary-General informs of the passing of Mr. William O'Neil, IMO Secretary-General Emeritus. Mr. O'Neil passed away on Thursday, 29 October 2020.

IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim wishes to express his sincere condolences to the Canadian Government, Mr. O'Neil's remaining family, and also pass on the condolences of the entire IMO membership and staff.

Mr. O'Neil was elected Secretary-General of IMO for a first term of Office beginning in 1990, a second term beginning in 1994, a third term beginning in 1998 and a further 2-year term from 2002 to 2004. He was the second longest serving Secretary-General of IMO.

During Mr. O'Neil's tenure, the Organization adopted a number of new treaties and responded to global issues such as maritime security and piracy. Mr. O'Neil personally acted to request that the IMO membership address key safety issues, including the safety of bulk carriers and of large passenger ships. He established a team of experts to look into ro-ro safety, following the tragic sinking of the **Estonia** ro-ro ferry. All of these led to significant improvements in maritime safety standards.

Protecting the environment was also paramount for Mr. O'Neil. He oversaw the adoption, in 1997, of the Protocol to the MARPOL Convention, to include a new Annex VI on Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships, now expanded to include energy efficiency requirements and revisions of the MARPOL Convention to accelerate the phase out of single hull tankers. His passion for protecting marine biodiversity laid the foundation for the development of measures to prevent the spread of potentially harmful aquatic species in ships' ballast water which would later, in 2004, be adopted as a new IMO treaty on ballast water management.

The introduction of the mandatory International Safety Management (ISM) Code and the key 1997 revisions to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, were among other landmark achievements made by IMO under Mr. O'Neil's stewardship.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Mr. O'Neil's leadership led to the development of an entirely new regime for the security in the maritime field, the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, which was adopted in less than 1 year, demonstrating the Organization's ability to nimbly respond to emerging threats.

The landmark public memorial to seafarers at IMO Headquarters in London stands as a monument to Mr. O'Neil's appreciation and acknowledgement of the human element in shipping and specifically the role of the people at the heart of shipping, the seafarers. The Seafarers Memorial Fund was established by Mr. O'Neil to fund the sculpture.

Mr. O'Neil was awarded the IMO International Maritime Prize for 2003 and will be fondly remembered by the staff of the Secretariat and the wider IMO family.

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