

**Capital Link's
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Dr Spyros M Polemis Introductory speech for Mr Thimios Mitropoulos

I have known Thimios Mitropoulos for a generation, certainly well before he was elected as the Secretary General of IMO where he served from January 2004 to December 2011. Our paths had crossed many times in the past, but nothing can compare to what transpired during his tenure. In May 2006, i.e. a year and a half later, I also happened to be elected Chairman of two other organisations, the International Chamber of Shipping, and the International Shipping Federation, and I was subsequently re-elected two more times, in 2008 and 2010, which meant that I served until May of 2012, in parallel with Thimio.

This was indeed a remarkable coincidence, because from our respective positions, we were able to work very closely together, side-by-side, on all of the important issues of the time concerning the shipping industry for the next five years or so. In a way, Thimio was in charge of all the governments in the world, and I was in charge of all shipping companies in the world. I wish this was literally true, but nevertheless, we had a great working relationship, for the benefit of the International Shipping Industry.

By a further coincidence, during those same years, Philip Embiricos was elected Chairman of BIMCO, Nick Fistes, Chairman of Intertanko, and Nicky Papadakis, Chairman of Intercargo. These were extraordinary times indeed, to have had five Greek personalities serving at the helm of these five organisations. We met often and we all worked hard to progress these matters, both within our organisations but also with the Governments at IMO.

Thimios was born in Piraeus, Greece, in May of 1939, to a seafaring family. His father was a Merchant Navy Chief Engineer, and his mother was the daughter of a Shipmaster and owner of brigantines and schooners which were captained by his sons. The family comes from Galaxidi, a major Greek maritime centre during the tall ships' era.

After six years of secondary school at the "St. Paul" French College in Piraeus, Thimios graduated top of his class with record marks in all subjects.

In 1957, he entered the Aspropyrgos Merchant Marine Academy and, in 1958, was appointed Captain of his class. He graduated with honours in 1959 as head of his class.

Between 1959 and 1962, he served as apprentice, second and chief deck officer on merchant ships, and, in 1962, he entered the Hellenic Coast Guard Academy as head of his class. He graduated in 1964, again as chief of his class with honours.

As a commissioned Coast Guard Officer, his first career appointment was in Corfu, and then in Piraeus.

In 1965 he won a scholarship to study shipping economics in Italy (Rome, Venice and Genoa) and, in 1970, he was selected to study marine technology (fire protection and life-saving appliances) in the United Kingdom with Lloyd's Register of Shipping.

Between 1966 and 1977 he participated, initially as a member and later as Head of the Greek Delegation, in the work of various Sub-Committees as well as the Maritime Safety Committee of IMO, where he served as Vice-Chairman and Chairman of certain working groups. He also participated in the work of the Council and the Assembly, as well as in the 1972 Collision Regulations and 1974 Safety of Life at Sea Conferences convened by IMO, where he was elected first Vice-Chairman of the Technical Committees of both. Between 1975-1977, he attended the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea as the representative of the Greek Ministry of Merchant Marine.

During his service with the Greek Maritime Administration, he participated in meetings of ILO, UNCTAD, OECD and the Consultative Shipping Group, whilst his association with IMO goes back to 1965, when he first represented Greece at the meeting of the Sub-Committee on Fire Protection in December of that year.

Between 1967 and 1972, he laid the foundations for the establishment of what became Greece's Joint Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue Centre.

Between 1972 and 1976, he regularly lectured at the Hellenic Coast Guard Academy and the Greek Master Mariners' Centre for Superior Studies on Shipping Economics and Policy as well as Maritime Safety and Safety of Navigation.

Between 1977 and 1979 he was Harbour Master of Corfu, with responsibility for the sea area surrounding Corfu and all the nearby Greek islands from a safety, security and environmental protection points of view. He retired with the rank of Rear Admiral.

Thimio is the author of several books on Shipping Economics and Policy, different categories and types of merchant ships, Safety of Navigation and other shipping-related matters

His book on “Tankers: Evolution and technical issues” won first prize at a PanHellenic competition to mark the Year of Shipping in 1969.

He joined IMO in January 1985 as Implementation Officer in the Maritime Safety Division and, in October of the same year, he was appointed Head of the Navigation Section. In 1989 he was promoted to Senior Deputy Director for Navigation and Related Matters and, in May 1992, he was appointed Director of the Maritime Safety Division and Secretary of the Maritime Safety Committee.

Between 1989 and 1998, he led IMO’s efforts to establish a global Search and Rescue (SAR) Plan through regional Conferences in Lisbon, Cape Town, Seoul, Valencia and Fremantle as well as a Conference in Florence to specifically consider SAR matters pertaining to Africa.

In May 2000, he was appointed Assistant Secretary-General retaining his duties as Director of the Maritime Safety Division, and in June 2003, Thimio was elected Secretary-General of IMO for the period 2004 to 2008. In November 2006, his mandate was renewed for another 4 years, concluding on 31 December 2011.

In June 2004, he was appointed Chancellor of the World Maritime University (Malmo, Sweden) and Chairman of the Governing Board of the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI, Malta).

In December of 2011, the IMO Assembly gave him the title of Secretary-General Emeritus, and in 2012, the IMO Council designated him Chancellor Emeritus of the World Maritime University and Chairman-Emeritus of IMLI.

Since 2010, Thimio is Chairman of the Board of the “Maria Tsakos” Foundation - International Centre for Maritime Research and Tradition and, since 2012, Chancellor of the Maritime Education and Training University (AMET) of Chennai, India.

His interests include swimming and diving, fishing and classical music. When he is not relaxing with his family, he is happiest indulging in his two other passions: reading, particularly naval history and Manchester United FC – or perhaps the other way around.

Mr. Mitropoulos is married to Chantal, and has two children, son, Elias and daughter, Athina.

Thimio has received scores of honours and medals throughout his distinguished career. Indeed, he has served with distinction, the greatest Industry in the world.