

24/02/2014

Minister of Merchant Marine

President and Board Members of the Board of Capital Link.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to thank the organizers of this Forum who have selected me to be the recipient of the "2014 Capital Link Greek Shipping Leadership Award".

A very special note of thanks to my friend Admiral Efthimios Mitropoulos, IMO Secretary General Emeritus recipient, only a few weeks ago, of the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Order of Phoenix of the Hellenic Republic and currently Chairman of the Maria Tsakos Foundation, a world respected shipping personality who has taken the time to come to Athens to introduce me to this Audience and present to me this Award.

Let us put our hands together for this exceptional personality.

I would further wish to thank all those belonging to the Shipping or the Financial Community, who have encouraged, helped and contributed to the remarkable journey of Greek shipping through time.

My dear Friends,

I have been involved in shipping for the last 60 years or so.

Shipping has been for me, more than an occupation.

It has been my whole life.

A learning process that taught me that nothing is impossible.

That everything is possible when an entrepreneur commits himself to a vision.

That everything is possible when you respect the laws of the sea.

When you balance risk with caution,

When you know when to stay firm and when to change course.

My life-long commitment to the laws of the sea, the “Blue Economy”, has also taught me, that entrepreneurship in the sea requires extensive knowledge.

It requires a life-long commitment to the idea of learning, since the laws of the maritime economy are in constant flow, as are the laws that govern human behavior and history.

When you devote yourself to the sea, you need to master the sort of knowledge that is associated with insight, first-hand experience and appreciation of the smallest detail.

The sea demands that you know.

The sea demands that you are there.

It demands that you must also know, when and where you should be,

The understanding of international relations and of the trends that move global economy,

The science of shipbuilding,

The structure of finance and logistics,

The way you can motivate, inspire and keep together a team

And of course, when one devotes himself to passenger shipping, it is crucial to master the art of hospitality, and the science of marketing.

Since the 1950's I have devoted myself to the knowledge of the sea.

The most valuable lesson that the sea gave me,
Is that that competition equals innovation.

From the ancient times of maritime economy the challenge was always who will be first.

Who will understand first and in time the call of international trade,
and who will identify first what is next,

Who will apply first the latest technology,

Who will discover first a dominant market trend or need,

Who will be daring enough to invest to new infrastructure and services,

I am proud to say, that Royal Cruise Line, Attica Group and Magna Marine, have proved to be worthy children of this long standing tradition of maritime innovation.

In my lifetime, I have had the privilege of learning from great figures of the maritime economy and of working with charismatic, determined and loyal people.

Together with my colleagues and crews we managed to bring forth small but influential breakthroughs in the evolution of shipping.

Together, we produced breakthroughs that contributed to the improvement of the cruising experience, the facilitation of transports, the growth of the tourism industry.

Together with my colleagues and crew we innovated in shipbuilding concepts, we connected ports and markets, we discovered new services.

Vessels like the Crown Odyssey, the Superfast and Blue Star ferries, carried something more than people and cargo. My organization has built 19 (nineteen) ships of that description at various important shipyards in Europe and South Korea.

These ships were carriers of values that are inherent to Greek shipping and brought new ideas in passenger ship buildings.

These ships carried above all an ethos that places the passenger at the heart of the whole endeavor.

The passenger as a demanding consumer of services, the passenger as a human being.

It was this ethos, this fundamental axiom that guided our efforts, discoveries and investments.

It was with this ethos that we took the Greek flag in highly competitive seas proving that we can survive and overcome global competition.

A message that has unique value, especially for the young generation and in a time when Greece is trying to re-establish its role and its presence in the global community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

In spite of the risks and hazards that lie ahead, the shipping industry will continue to grow together with the global economy.

Ninety percent of world trade is carried by sea. Cruising in the 21st century emerges as one of the most important pillars of mass tourism.

Shipping was, is and will continue to be the artery donor of the real economy.

It is up to the international shipping community to position itself with vision and caution to face the new challenges.

To proceed with daring spirit when necessary and to exercise caution when needed, so as to avoid the danger of excessive enthusiasm.

For Hellenism and Greece shipping will always be something uniquely precious.

It is more than a tradition, more than a way of life.

In a global economy and global society there is immense value in being a leader, in a trade, in a sector, in an industry, in any industry

The Greek state should acknowledge and appreciate the importance of Greek shipping and incorporate the synergies of the blue economy into a National Strategy Plan which would help to boost the growth of the country's economy.

If I could start again my life and my career I would try and do exactly the same things as I did in the past and the present.

Thank you.

