

Athens, 15th February 2017

**Capital Link Greek Shipping Leadership Award
honouring
Professor Costas Th. Grammenos**

Introductory Remarks

Dear Nicolas and Olga, dear friends,

It is with great joy and a sense of fulfillment that I stand here to celebrate a real visionary for his contribution towards education and shipping, Professor Costas Grammenos.

What he started as a small scale part-time shipping course more than 30 years ago, has become the 'premier' global, maritime, academic curriculum.

His timing in the early 80's was really contrarian. The market then, like now, was in the midst of a long recession (what's new for shipping!). The industry was out of the radar screen, full of gloom and doom. Shipping was a sore subject, but the Professor through his strong Hellenic tradition, knew that the sea gets 'seasick', but it always survives.

He proves the point that although shipping is in the blood (and certainly in the Greek blood), you need the right veins to make it work, and Professor Grammenos' course provided those academic arteries for the very first time, in shipping's long history.

His course gave the opportunity to young men and women to live and study in a very international environment, full of on-hands experience, in one of the most exciting cities, London, and offered multiple career opportunities in high profile businesses around the globe, building a very tightly-knit network, known as the "Harvard" of shipping.

The course taught innovative ideas about trade and banking, opened horizons to equity finance and globalisation and even accepted dissertations on "shipping in the public markets" back in the 80's!

For better or worse, I have been a guinea pig in this experiment. In the mid-80's after graduating in the US, I was between starting a hi-tech company out of my garage in Kardamyla, or go to Cass. So now, a couple of billion dollars less later, I have no regrets, exactly the opposite, I feel very proud to be a part of it.

On my many and long journeys as a businessman and with my Intertanko hat on, I meet Professor Grammenos' former students in top positions all over the world, amongst whom there is a strong feeling of solidarity, camaraderie and networking. "How is the Professor?", they all ask.

On a recent trip to the Far East, I was in the middle of a heated exchange and negotiation. The broker, in fear of his commission, interfered and mentioned Cass Business School common alumnus status and needless to say, many 'sakes' and 'Kanpai' later, a very cordial deal was signed (I will charge the Professor!). The same in Singapore, in Korea, in India, in Scandinavia, in the UK and US and all over maritime clusters.

But it is not only the level of education and networking possibilities that the Professor oversees, it's his amazing ability to remember every single one of the more than 3,000 students that he has taught.

I often call him to ask about some of my business associates or a new relationship and he just shoots back; "Oh Natasha, nice girl, class of 08, average student, went to Lucoil and is now with Gazprom Singapore, great personality", or, "Ah yes, John, class of 04, graduated with 70, good student, tough character, be careful", etc., etc.

So the Professor not only cares about the one or two years you spend on his course, but he considers every one of his graduates to be like family. He helps and cares for their well-being and without you knowing it, follows your developments. To such an extent, that I thought he was using a Cass graduate location app on his I-Phone to track us all down!!

But knowing the Professor's technological abilities, I can assure you he doesn't!! It all comes naturally - his love for education, his work and people, create the chemistry that keeps us together.

With this, I want to congratulate Capital Link for their choice and say a big "thank you" to the Professor, on behalf of all shipping people, for his contribution to our industry's profile and also warn him not to make any retirement plans until my children graduate!!

Thank you Professor....