

On 5 August IMO Secretary General Kitack Lim said:

*'I express my deepest condolences and sincerest sympathies to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Lebanon following the catastrophic explosions in the port of Beirut yesterday.*

*'The port provides a vital artery bringing food, medicines and supplies to the country and its destruction will have devastating consequences.*

*'The United Nations is assisting the immediate response to the incident. The International Maritime Organization stands ready to assist in any way we can.'*

We at IFSMA join IMO in sending our deepest condolences to the people of Lebanon at this difficult time.

Port of Beirut ([www.portdebeyrouth.com](http://www.portdebeyrouth.com)) is among the top ten seaports in the Mediterranean Sea and is considered the gateway to the Middle East. The port was transformed through self-financing from a local port to a regional and a transshipment hub for the region.

The Port of Beirut lies within a longitude of 35 57' E and a latitude of 35 15' N, forming the midpoint of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa that makes the port a passage for traffic between East and West.

During the mid-1970s, the Port of Beirut was an important international trading station with the surrounding Arab countries and up until today it has preserved its commercial nature.

Earlier this year under a *Gestion et Exploitation du Port de Beyrouth* authorities called for an international bid to Manage, Operate and Maintain the Container Terminal at the Port of Beirut.