

**Captain Juan Gamper, President of Nautilus,  
Captain Carlos Beth, past President of Nautilus,  
Directors and Members of Nautilus,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Members of IFSMA,**

Good morning and a very warm welcome to the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual General Assembly (AGA) of IFSMA, the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations.

Dear Captain Gamper, Dear Juan,

I thank you very much, indeed, for your kind words and your warm welcome to all attendees at this Annual General Assembly. On behalf of our president, Captain Hans Sande, I wholeheartedly thank you as well as the directors and members of Nautilus for inviting us to hold this AGA in Viña del Mar. Unfortunately Captain Sande is unable to be with us this year, as he had to attend the funeral of Captain Tore Gjestrum, his predecessor as Director of our Norwegian member association. Captain Gjestrum played a key role when, in 1995, the Norwegian Mates Union and the Norwegian Masters Union were merged into the Norwegian Maritime Officers Union. Unfortunately Captain Gjestrum's funeral coincided with Captain Sande's flight to Santiago de Chile, so he asked me to chair this Annual General Assembly on his behalf.

Please stand up for a minute of silence in remembrance of Captain Gjestrum and all our fellow colleagues who have passed away during the last year.

(Delegates stood for a minute's silence in remembrance)

Thank you.

When the 40<sup>th</sup> AGA accepted Chile to be this year's AGA host country my memory immediately went back more than 30 years, to when I was a young cadet, who had only just started his maritime career. I sailed onboard a general cargo ship to the west coast of South America. Having called at ports in Columbia, Ecuador and Peru, where we were challenged with cargo theft, armed robbery and piracy, it made a real

difference, when we finally called at the ports of Antofagasta, Valparaiso and San Antonio, where we had the pleasure to enjoy the same warm Chilean hospitality that we, the delegates to the 41<sup>st</sup> IFSMA Annual General Assembly, have the pleasure to savour right now.

A few facts about Chile - our host country - which has such a rich maritime history. Chile has a coastline of 6,435km, which, when compared to the land mass, is vast. It stretches from North of the Tropic of Capricorn to Cape Horn. It is no surprise that Chile has a rich and deeply ingrained maritime history to support its industries. Set against the stunning and dramatic Andes, Chile's coastline is dotted with over 30 ports, allowing Chile to engage in trade throughout the world, exporting Chile's great mineral and agricultural wealth, whilst also boasting a thriving fishing industry. With a population of approximately 17.5 million persons it can claim a rich diversity from the various indigenous peoples who make up its peoples.

Here, in Viña del Mar, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, we are suitably located close to two of Chile's major ports, Valparaiso and San Antonio, which both flourish with maritime activity. These ports are fuelling and driving Chile's economy, and are excellent examples of the vitality of merchant shipping, and respectively, our organisation.

Historically, Valparaíso was a major port of call for ships rounding Cape Horn, before the Panama Canal was constructed - earning the port the suitable nickname, the 'Jewel of the Pacific'. Today Valparaiso is the main container and passenger port in Chile, transferring 10 million tons annually, as well as serving about 50 cruises and 150,000 passengers.

The port of San Antonio is approximately 80km to the south of Valparaiso, and handles the majority of Chile's freight. San Antonio has grown considerably over the last few decades in terms of space, loading areas, cargo transfer and ship size. San Antonio is also a vast Chilean fishing hub, an industry which is celebrated each year on the 29th June in honour of the fishermen Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the Fiesta de San Pedro.

Apart from commercial shipping activities I must also mention the work done by the Chilean Navy and Coast Guard for – amongst tasks – saving seafarers from the mortal dangers that the sea can throw at them. This goes way back to the rescue of the Shackleton expedition to the South Pole over one hundred years ago and can be traced through to the rescue of the passengers and crew of the cruise ship “Explorer” from Antarctica; and beyond. This highlights the Chilean relationship with the sea and its dangers and its willingness to assist those in peril. In 2012 the IMO Bravery Award was presented to Able Seaman César Flores of the Chilean Navy who as a rescue swimmer saved the lives of seven persons from the motor launch Rosita V in bad weather with total disregard of his own life.

The passing months have once again seen a number of changes to our association and its operation as we adapt to supply our membership with the tools needed to remain current and relevant in the modern world. Our membership in 35 national associations and numerous individual members scattered around the world require us to supply them with reasons why it is important to be part of the IFSMA family. In order to keep in touch with its membership IFSMA has re-launched its webpage ([www.ifsma.org](http://www.ifsma.org)) and bi-monthly Newsletter but also started its own home at Facebook ([www.facebook.com/ifsma](https://www.facebook.com/ifsma)). It is hoped that by making use of the capabilities of social media IFSMA will be able to get in touch with the young generation of shipmasters and keep the IFSMA membership more involved in the daily work of the organisation.

The year since our last AGA in Sandefjord has once again been challenged by several maritime accidents, the loss of life at sea and the criminalization of shipmasters involved in these incidents.

To pick just one: The fire on board the Italian flagged Ro-Pax ferry “Norman Atlantic”. 25 passengers and at least three out of a minimum of six stowaways lost their lives. This case leaves open at least the following questions for further consideration by the maritime community:

- 1) the effectiveness of port security measures;

2) the challenges of mass evacuation under severe conditions; and

3) the ongoing criminalization of the shipmaster immediately after the incident.

Very recently a non-maritime disaster, the loss of Germanwings flight 9525 in the French Alps, caused severe concern within the airline industry. Presently one can hear voices asking whether or not in industries where a single human misconduct – whether on purpose or not – can cause tremendous damage to human life, the environment and/or property, a strict regime of mental health screening should be introduced. I strongly believe that IFSMA should make up its mind on this issue, sooner rather than later, and be one of the forerunners for this in the maritime industry.

These and more challenges lie ahead of us. In order to meet them we should bear in mind that we can only do so when we stand together, united, which takes us back to the IFSMA motto “Unity for Safety at Sea”. IFSMA is one of the few NGOs at the IMO who is a truly independent organization that owes nothing to anyone apart from its members and that is where its strength lies.

This gives us the right to speak out and be the international voice of the serving shipmasters when others remain silent. When we get involved we do so as equals because of who we are and what we do. While we are dedicated to supporting and assisting the shipmaster we understand that no shipmaster can operate a ship only by himself. Therefore, by assisting in matters that affect the crew we are also supporting the shipmaster.

Finally, I want to thank everyone – also on behalf of our president, Captain Hans Sande – who over the past 41 years has contributed to IFSMA and made it what it is today. Without you there would be no IFSMA. This must include our valued hosts of this AGA – Nautilus, our Chilean member association. Thank you, once again for hosting this event.