

**SPEECH BY MR ANDREAS SOHMEN-PAO, CHAIRMAN,
SINGAPORE MARITIME FOUNDATION AT THE SMF NEW YEAR COCKTAIL
RECEPTION 2017, HELD AT THE REGENT SINGAPORE ON
WEDNESDAY, 11 JANUARY 2017, 8.00PM**

Mrs Josephine Teo, Senior Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Transport

Mr Pang Kin Keong, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport

Mr. Niam Chiang Meng, Chairman, MPA

Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentleman,

Introduction

1. Welcome to this SMF New Year Cocktail Reception.
2. Some of you may have heard the old saying “anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm”. Publilius Syrus probably said it to make himself feel better when times were difficult. In a similar vein, I remember one of my mentors in shipping saying to me: “It wouldn't be fun if it was easy”. I realised after he said it for the tenth time that this must be a very fun industry indeed.
3. Whether you are a shipowner battling the markets or in government working to strengthen the economy in the face of global headwinds, we can all sympathise with the philosophers in these times like these.
4. What is so impressive in Singapore is that rather than just talking about problems, everyone gets on with actions and solutions. That is true of the shipping community here, and it is true of the Ministry and the MPA whose unwavering support has made Singapore the number one shipping centre in the world.

5. So this is not just another New Year reception taking place in another maritime city. It is THE New Year reception that brings together the strongest maritime community in the world in the leading international maritime centre.
6. While we can take pride in what has been achieved, we clearly have to keep working at it. That is the Singapore way – not to rest on our laurels. And it is also the Singapore way not to give fluffy philosophical speeches, so now I'm going to update you on some concrete achievements and objectives.

Singapore's Maritime Performance

7. In terms of Singapore's maritime performance: we saw good growth in the Registry and maintained the fifth largest ownership position by flag. Vessel arrival tonnage increased by 6.3 per cent last year, while container throughput achieved 30.9 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) - a similar result to 2015. And Singapore maintained its position as the world's top bunkering port. So in spite of tough markets, activity levels remain high. With some consolidation now and discipline in ordering of new tonnage, and continued global economic growth, we should see a gradual improvement from the lows of last year.

Building the Maritime Manpower Pipeline

8. At SMF, we have been working on the Maritime Manpower Pipeline. Last month, the Maritime Singapore Connect (MSC) Office launched a website to profile the maritime industry and to connect students and jobseekers with openings. This website allows your company to publicise scholarships, management trainee programmes, jobs and internships. Your team can register to browse resumes to fill your hiring needs. All services are free as the MSC Office is part of a SkillsFuture initiative by the MPA and SMF.
9. On the training and education front, the MaritimeONE Scholarship Programme has reached a total of 275 scholars with \$7.3 million of scholarships awarded. Last year, we gave out a scholarship to a Computer Science student for the first time, an area where we will clearly see an increasing need in the years to come.

10. I'm very pleased to share with you that 94 per cent of the scholars who have completed their 3 year commitment to serve the maritime sector are still working in the industry. So not only are we bringing these young people in, we are convincing them to stay. These scholarships are good value for money because SMF helps to absorb a lot of the administration cost and effort through economies of scale. You get to choose the bright individuals you want, while also helping the community to develop talent. Thank you for your ongoing support for this effort, and we would be pleased to see more new sponsors next year.

Cross-Industry Collaboration and International Partnerships

11. We have also been working on cross-industry collaboration and international partnerships. In the past year, SMF spearheaded the Singapore Maritime Ambassadors Programme that gathers outstanding professionals to inspire young people to pursue maritime-related courses and careers. 39 ambassadors have been appointed so far and we are looking to appoint more in the months to come.

12. In 2016, we put together a successful Maritime Week while working hard with Seatrade to prepare for the sixth edition of SeaAsia, the major biennial conference and exhibition this coming April. We have a fantastic line-up for this year's event, and look forward to your participation in the months ahead. As a sneak preview, we are planning a parliamentary-style debate on the topic "The best days of the independent shipowner are over". So if you want to hear the answer, please be there.

13. All of this collaboration holds the key to our future success. Nowadays everyone can build bricks and mortar, but what makes us stronger is the cohesiveness of the maritime community, the exchange of ideas, and the innovation that can come from collaboration.

14. The achievements of the past are the result of your hard work, and the successes ahead are waiting for us to create together. Thank you all for your efforts on behalf of Maritime Singapore, thank you to the Ministries and the MPA for your continued support, and thanks to my fellow board members at SMF for your contributions to strengthening the maritime sector here.

15. May I wish you all a happy and prosperous new year and all the best for 2017.

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