

Efthimios E. Mitropoulos, Secretary-General IMO

Biography



Efthimios (Thimio) E. Mitropoulos was born in Piraeus, Greece, on 30 May 1939, to a genuinely maritime family, being the son of a merchant navy chief engineer officer father and of a mother the daughter of a shipmaster and owner of brigantines and schooners captained by his sons. The family comes from Galaxidi, a major Greek maritime centre during the tall ships' era.

After six years of secondary school studies at the 'St. Paul' French College in Pireaus, Mr. Mitropoulos graduated chief of his class.

In 1957 he entered the Aspropyrgos Merchant Marine Academy and, in 1958, was appointed Captain of the Academy. He graduated with honours in 1959 as chief of his class.

Between 1959 and 1962, he served as apprentice, second and chief deck officer on merchant ships on voyages around the world and, in 1962, he entered the Hellenic Coast Guard Academy as chief of his class. He graduated in 1964, again as chief of his class with honours.

He then started his career as a commissioned Coast Guard Officer in Corfu, first and Piraeus, later. He retired with the rank of Rear Admiral.

In 1965 he won a scholarship to study shipping economics in Italy (Rome, Venice and Genoa) and in 1970 he was selected to study marine technology (fire protection and life-saving appliances) in the United Kingdom (Lloyd's Register of Shipping).

Between 1966 and 1977 he participated, initially as a member and later as Head of the Greek Delegation, in the work of various Sub-Committees and the Maritime Safety Committee of IMO (which he served also as vice-chairman and chairman of working groups). He also participated in the work of Council and the Assembly as well as at the 1972 Collision Regulations and 1974 Safety of Life at Sea Conferences convened by IMO, where he was elected first Vice-Chairman of the Technical Committee of both. He attended the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1975-1977) as the representative of the Greek Ministry of Mercantile Marine at the multi-ministerial Greek delegation.

During his service with the Greek Maritime Administration, he participated at meetings of ILO, UNCTAD, OECD and the Consultative Shipping Group, while his association with IMO goes back to 1965 when he first represented Greece at the meeting of the Sub-Committee on Fire Protection in December of that year.

Between 1967 and 1972, he laid the foundations for the establishment of what has now become Greece's Joint Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue Centre.

Between 1972 and 1976, he regularly lectured at the Hellenic Coast Guard Academy and the Greek Master Mariners' Centre of Superior Studies on shipping economics and policy and maritime safety/safety of navigation subjects, respectively.

Between 1977 and 1979 he was Harbour Master of Corfu, with responsibility for the sea area surrounding Corfu and all the nearby Greek islands from the safety, security and environmental protection points of view.

Author of several books on shipping economics and policy, categories/types of merchant vessels, safety of navigation and other shipping-related matters (see attachment). His book on "Tankers: Evolution and technical issues" won first prize at a panhellenic competition to mark the Year of Shipping, 1969

Joined IMO in January 1979 as Implementation Officer in the Maritime Safety Division and in October 1985 was appointed Head of the Navigation Section. In 1989 he was promoted to Senior Deputy Director for Navigation and Related Matters and in May 1992 was appointed Director of the Maritime Safety Division and Secretary of the Maritime Safety Committee.

Between 1989 and 1998, he led IMO's efforts to establish a global Search and Rescue (SAR) Plan through regional Conferences in Lisbon, Cape Town, Seoul, Valencia and Fremantle and a Conference in Florence to specifically consider SAR matters pertaining to Africa.

In May 2000, he was appointed Assistant Secretary-General retaining his duties as Director of the Maritime Safety Division.

In November 2003, Mr. Mitropoulos was elected Secretary-General for the period 2004 to 2008. In November 2006, the IMO Council decided to renew his mandate for another 4 years, concluding 31 December 2011.

In June 2004, he was appointed Chancellor of the World Maritime University (Malmo, Sweden) and Chairman of the Governing Board of the International Maritime Law Institute (Malta).

His interests include swimming and diving, fishing, football, classical music and reading, in particular naval history.

Mr. Mitropoulos is married to Chantal, née Byvoet and has one son, Elias and one daughter, Athina.

Honours, medals and memberships

Mr. Mitropoulos has been honoured with:

- Commander, Order of the Phoenix of the Hellenic Republic
- Commendatore, Order of Merit of the Italian Republic
- St. Marcus Cross, Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa
- Coastguard Award, Grand Cross, Argentina
- "15 November 1817" medal, Uruguay
- Officier de l'Ordre du Mérite Maritime de la France
- Medal of the Order of the Naval Merit, Brazil
- US Coast Guard Distinguished Public Service Award
- Colombian Navy Medal for "Servicios Distinguidos a la Dirección General Marítima"

- Doctor Honoris Causa, Nicola Vaptsarov Naval Academy, Varna, Bulgaria
- Doctor Honoris Causa, Maritime University, Constanza, Romania
- Doctor of Humane Letters, Schiller International University, London Branch
- Doctor Honoris Causa in Economy and Commerce, University of Messina, Italy
- Doctor of Science Honoris Causa, City University, London
- Honorary Doctor, Odessa National Maritime Academy, Ukraine
- International Hall of Fame Awards, New York City
- 2007 Silver Bell Award, The Seamen's Church Institute, New York
- Honorary PHD degree on Business Administration, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Republic of Korea
- Doctor Honoris Causa, Dalian Maritime University, China
- Danish Shipowners' Association Maritime Award
- Union of Greek Shipowners 2006 Award for the Environment
- Interferry Person of Distinction, 2006
- Grand'Ufficiale, Order of Merit of the Italian Republic

He is:

- Honorary Citizen of Galaxidi, Greece
- Honorary Member of the Hellenic Institute of Marine Technology and the Shipmasters' Union of Greece
- Honorary Member of the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations
- Honorary Member of the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities
- Fellow, Royal Institute of Navigation
- Honorary Fellow, Nautical Institute
- Honorary Member, Propeller Club
- Governor, Royal National Lifeboat Institution
- Member, Royal Automobile Club

Books written by E.E. Mitropoulos

1. Tankers: Evolution and technical issues (Piraeus, 1969 - Pages 150)
2. Studies in Shipping Economics (Piraeus, 1970 - Pages 240)
3. Safety of Navigation (Piraeus, 1971 - Pages 430)
4. Categories and Types of Merchant Ships (Piraeus, 1973 - Pages 520)
5. Collision Avoidance at Sea (Piraeus, 1975 - Pages 300)
6. Separation of Traffic at Sea (Piraeus, 1976 - Pages 160)
7. Shipping Economics and Policy (Piraeus, 1981 - Pages 378)