



Check Against Delivery

OPENING REMARKS
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**National Workshop for Maritime Administrators
under the IMO Member state Audit Scheme (IMSAS)**

24th February 2025

**Good morning, esteemed participants, IMO representatives,
and fellow maritime professionals,**

It is truly a pleasure to welcome you all to this important national workshop for maritime administrators, right here in our beautiful Belize. Over the next five days, we will be working together under the framework of the **International Maritime Organization's Member State Audit Scheme—IMSAS**. This gathering is not just about processes and procedures; it is a testament to our shared commitment to **maritime safety, security, and protecting our environment**.

Let me begin by extending a warm welcome to the **representatives from the IMO**. Your continued support and expertise have been invaluable in making this workshop a reality. We deeply appreciate your partnership and the guidance you provide as we strive for maritime excellence.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge **Mr. Paul Gersok**, the newly appointed **Managing Director of IMMARBE**. Mr.

Gersok brings with him a wealth of international maritime experience, having held key leadership roles focused on transforming maritime operations and enhancing safety and quality standards. His appointment comes at a pivotal moment for IMMARBE, as the organization assumes **its new status under the recently enacted IMMARBE Act.**

This **IMMARBE Act** is more than just a legislative milestone—it **directly supports the objectives of this workshop.** By strengthening Belize’s maritime governance framework, the Act enhances our ability to **align national policies with international maritime obligations.** This alignment is critical as we prepare for the **upcoming IMSAS audit in November,** ensuring that Belize remains a **trusted and respected player in the global maritime community.**

As **Registrar of Merchant Shipping,** I understand the critical roles each of you plays in managing the complexities of the maritime sector. Your presence here today demonstrates not only your dedication to your respective agencies but also to our **collective mission:** ensuring a **safe, secure, and sustainable maritime environment** for all.

Reflecting on how far we have come, I would like to highlight the progress we have made, particularly with the **pre-audit completed in September last year.** That pre-audit was a key step, allowing us to identify areas for improvement and gave us the insights we needed to prepare for what lies ahead. The knowledge gained has set a strong foundation, and this workshop is another crucial part of our preparation as we look forward to a **successful audit in November.**

But this week is about more than just preparation. It is an **opportunity for tangible progress.** By the end of this workshop, we expect participants to have a **clearer understanding of the IMSAS audit**

framework, strengthened inter-agency collaboration, and practical action plans for addressing identified gaps. These outcomes are essential for ensuring a **smooth audit process** and for enhancing **Belize’s maritime compliance profile** on the international stage.

As we look ahead, it is equally important to recognize the high standard Belize has set with its outstanding performance in the **Fourth Round CFATF Mutual Evaluation**. That success has raised the bar, and there is now a **heightened expectation** for the maritime sector to deliver results of a similarly commendable standard. Achieving this will require the same determination, collaboration, and attention to detail that led to our previous success.

Additionally, this workshop provides a platform to **share knowledge, exchange ideas, and build stronger networks**. Each of you brings unique experiences and perspectives. Together, you’ll explore the inner workings of **IMSAS**, delve into the frameworks that guide your work, and prepare for the responsibilities ahead.

Throughout the week, you will engage in **meaningful discussions and practical exercises**. From understanding the audit framework to examining the roles of **flag, port, and coastal states**, you will gain essential tools for conducting effective audits and implementing corrective measures.

Importantly, this workshop will also **highlight the vital contributions of women in maritime**, as we continue to **build an inclusive and diverse industry**. The active participation of women is essential not only for equality but for the innovation and resilience of the maritime sector. As the IMO’s theme for 2024 emphasizes, **“Empowering Women in the Maritime Community”** is not just a

slogan—it is a commitment we all share. Let us use this platform to champion the role of women in shaping a sustainable future for our industry.

I encourage you to make the most of this experience. **Participate actively, ask questions, share your thoughts, and learn from each other.** The success of this workshop depends on your **engagement and collaboration.**

As you navigate this week together, remember our **shared goal:** enhancing the **safety and security** of our maritime domain, **protecting our marine environment,** and **upholding the integrity** of our maritime operations.

With **Mr. Gersok’s leadership at IMMARBE** and the **strengthened legal framework** provided by the **IMMARBE Act,** we are well-positioned to meet the challenges ahead. This workshop represents a **crucial step** in aligning our national efforts with international standards and ensuring that **Belize remains a respected player in the global maritime community.**

Thank you all for being here, for your dedication to the maritime community, and for your **commitment to excellence.** I wish you a **productive, insightful, and rewarding week** ahead.

Let’s set sail into this workshop with enthusiasm and determination.

Thank you

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