

MESSAGE BY CLLR. NETO ZARZAR LIGHE, SR.
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ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2025 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR WOMEN IN MARITIME

May 18, 2025

Distinguished guests,
Esteemed colleagues,
Maritime professionals,
Women pioneers and rising stars,
And to all of you joining us in person and around the world,

Today, we gather not just to mark a date on the calendar, but to celebrate a movement, a global awakening to the power, potential, and promise of women in the maritime domain. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Liberia and the Liberia Maritime Authority, I bring you warm greetings and unwavering commitment as we commemorate the International Day for Women in Maritime 2025 under the theme: "An Ocean of Opportunities for Women."

This theme is more than a call; it's a charge. A call to move beyond awareness to accountability. A charge to move beyond promises to progress. And a bold reminder that time waits for no one, especially those whose dreams and destinies have been delayed for too long.

For centuries, the maritime industry has been characterized by the strength of its ships, the vastness of its oceans, and the daring of those who dare to navigate it. But it is time the world recognizes that strength, vastness, and daring are not gendered qualities, they are human ones.

It is time to say this, loudly and clearly: The ocean does not discriminate, neither should we.

Here in Liberia, we are proud of our rich maritime legacy. But we are equally aware that a legacy that excludes half of our population is incomplete. That is why, at the Liberia Maritime Authority, we are no longer content with admiring diversity, we are institutionalizing it.

We are deliberately opening doors, and in many cases, breaking down walls:

- At the Liberia Maritime Training Institute, we are actively increasing female enrollment through scholarships, safe accommodations, and access to mentorship.
- We are working hand-in-hand with WIMOWCA Liberia Chapter and other stakeholders to ensure that women not only have seats at the table, but also voices that are heard and valued.
- And we are embedding gender equity in our policies, training, recruitment, and leadership pathways, not as a favor, but as a strategic imperative.

Let me be honest: the work is not easy. We still see pay gaps. We still see underrepresentation at senior levels. And yes, we still hear the tired questions: "Can women handle life at sea?" "Is maritime really for them?"

To that, I say: look at the data. Look at the results. But more importantly, look at the women.

Look at the cadet who wakes at dawn to train harder than anyone else.

Look at the engineer who leads her team with discipline and grace.

Look at the port manager, the safety inspector, the maritime lawyer, the fish processor, the policy expert, the entrepreneur; breaking barriers not for applause, but for purpose.

To the women of the sea and shore: your courage is not invisible.

Your sacrifice is not unnoticed.

Your leadership is not optional, it is essential.

And to our young girls across Liberia and beyond, those who look to the horizon and wonder if there's a place for them in this industry; I want you to hear me clearly:

Yes, there is.

You belong here. You are the future captains of our fleets, architects of our ports, champions of our policies. You are not alone. We see you. We believe in you. And we are here to lift you.

To our male counterparts and leaders, let me say this: gender equity is not a women's agenda. It is a humanity agenda. When women rise, we all rise. And in the maritime world, diversity is not just moral, it is smart. It leads to safer ships, more innovative solutions, and sustainable growth for the global blue economy.

As Commissioner of the Liberia Maritime Authority, I do not make empty promises. So today, I reaffirm our commitment, not in theory, but in measurable action:

- To implement policies that ensure equal pay for equal work.
- To ensure leadership roles are filled by the most capable, not the most familiar.
- To ensure every training, every scholarship, and every opportunity is accessible to women and girls across Liberia.

This is not just Liberia's promise. It is my personal vow.

So, let us not leave here today with only speeches and smiles. Let us leave with urgency. With responsibility. Let us accelerate action, not tomorrow, but now.

Let us be the generation that didn't just talk about change, but made it happen.

Let us be the voice, the bridge, the tide that carries women forward.

And let us never forget that no vessel, no voyage, and no victory is complete without women.

Happy International Day for Women in Maritime! God bless you. God bless Liberia. And may our seas be ever fair and inclusive.

Thank you.