

**Speech by Michael Kingston, Goleen, Co Cork, Ireland, Special
Advisor to the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment
Working Group**

The Reform Club, Pall Mall, London

On the Occasion of the Arctic Encounter London Gala Dinner

ON JANUARY 18, 2019

My Lords,

Ladies,

Members of Parliament,

Senator Murkowski,

Members of the Government of Kingdom of Denmark,

Distinguished Officers of the United States Coastguard, United States
Military, United Kingdom Military,

Distinguished Members of National and International Maritime
Organisations,

Honoured guests, Ladies and gentlemen

It is a huge privilege to be asked to speak here this evening in this famous place, The Reform Club, a place where my famous compatriot Daniel O Connell was a member and made, within these hallowed walls, such a contribution to humanity, and under whose shadow I have the honour of speaking here this evening at this dinner to celebrate the fantastic [symposium](#) that you have attended over the past two days, organised brilliantly by The Arctic Encounter in the USA and the Polar Research and Policy Initiative in the United Kingdom by your excellent team work in each organisation and across the Atlantic,

with the support of The Palace of Westminster, The Navy and Military Club, and here at the Reform Club.

I have worked with both the United States and the United Kingdom and am currently a Special Advisor to the Arctic Council's Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group (PAME). In particular I am on the organising Committee of the [Arctic Shipping Best Practices Information Forum](#) which was established to assist with the harmonised implementation of the Polar Code. It has been an enormous success.

Unfortunately, due to a massive commitment in Ireland, where I am from originally, but very much linked to these developments, I was unable to assist as much as I would have liked to, or attend the Conference. I will mention that in a moment.

I understand that the Maritime Sector Speakers made reference to the Forum, and I noted that my friend, Neil Roberts, who I have worked very closely with from Lloyd's Market Association, and also Dr Heike Deggim, accompanying me here this evening, Director of Maritime Safety at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), who I have also worked very closely with, were speaking. Both those individuals know what they are talking about and are champions of safer and better regulation that is fit for purpose, not to stop industry, but to allow industry to prosper in a safe and organised way that protects seafarers, the environment, and our rescue services.

My background is that, as a lawyer, having carried out reviews with Lloyd's into the Deepwater Horizon Disaster and the Costa Concordia Disaster, I then worked on Lloyd's of London's 2012 Arctic Report and it was clear cross jurisdictional regulations were required and information needed to be gathered to make better decisions.

So, not someone who rests on nice looking reports and fireside chats, I went out and worked with the Arctic States, at the request of Sweden who chaired the Arctic Council, and made a presentation at the IMO, chaired by Dr Deggim. I then found myself representing the International Union of Marine Insurance on the finalisation of the Polar Code and helped get a universally understandable Ice regime system for ship limitation into the Code.

Then, recognising that [rules are one thing implementation another](#), I was involved in a proposal to the Arctic Council to set up a Best Practice Forum. The IMO and PAME held a conference, rather like this one, their first ever in Malmo in August 2015, and I was suggested by the United States and the IMO to make a presentation there about setting up a forum. The rest is history and the Forum was [established at the Fairbanks Declaration](#) in Senator Murkowski's presence. I would like to acknowledge the great work of the United States, the USCG, NOAA, US Navy, the Arctic Research Council, and so many other agencies, but also the Alaskan people and their leaders, Senator Murkowski, Senator Dan Sullivan, and former Lieutenant Governor Mead Treadwell, who is here this evening. They understand the issues, they understand their people, putting indigenous rights, their environment, fishermen, and their maritime industry at the forefront of their Agenda.

Similarly, I would like to acknowledge the great work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Jane Rumble Head of the Polar Regions Section, and Jane Francis of the British Antarctic Survey, The British Maritime Coastal Administration, and all Maritime Institutions here in the UK, and MP's at Westminster, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Polar Regions, Secretary Duncan Depledge, and Chairman, James Gray MP for their support.

The Forum is extremely important and in simple terms it is a collaboration with participants of all the recognised stakeholders in the Arctic (also with some Antarctic participation): Governments.

International Regulators (IMO), industry (e.g. ICS, OCIMF etc), the research community, the indigenous communities, and so on. The participants support a web Portal, launched here in London at the [2nd Forum Meeting](#), at the Irish Cultural Centre, where I am a Director, (we always in Ireland like to support our neighbours in the UK) that makes it easy to follow the requirements, where participants have submitted information as to what information they think should be relied on for that particular Chapter. There is also a State Administration Page where the Arctic States have submitted information.

If you know nothing about the Polar Regions or the Polar Code and are set an exam question you would be able to do a very good job at explaining with reference to the Portal how you will plan your voyage from A to B.

I encourage you to look at it at www.arcticshippingforum.is

And at the last Arctic Council PAME meeting in Vladivostok I did an important talk that explains it all and you are very welcome to a copy if you contact me.

That is how regulation in an ideal world should work. It is an enormous success. The third Forum meeting will take place in June at the United States Embassy here in London. Only yesterday during your conference, in fact during the Marine section, I had a conference call with the organising Committee.

And I have presented at the IMO, both at the Marine Environment Protection Committee and the Maritime Safety Committee, to all the Worlds Delegations the Forum and Portal in the run up to its launch, with Finland, Kingdom of Denmark and Norway on behalf of the 8 Arctic States, at the request of the IMO, at their headquarters here in

London, as an example of how to implement regulation elsewhere in the world.

So, Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan in absentia, former Lt Governor Treadwell, what we achieved during the US Chairmanship was quite magnificent and I thank you again for the support of Alaska and the United States.

We have demonstrated in this process how important it is to always work together, the 8 Arctic States working together at the IMO on the Polar Code as a block to make it fit for purpose, then the IMO with PAME, and now the incredible collaboration of participants in the Forum to make sure the Polar Code is implemented correctly.

And new ideas to support safe shipping are always the way forward and I am aware that Senator Murkowski and Senator Sullivan have looked at, and are supporting legislation for an Arctic Seaway Development Co-Operation, which will assist with safety for commercial shipping in the Arctic, and I wish you luck with that and fully endorse its objective because it demonstrates important foresight.

I must mention the reason why I could not help with this Conference and that is because I was involved in a very important Commemoration in Bantry, Co Cork, Ireland last week, where I am from and I am only just back today.

In 1974 the IMO agreed regulation – SOLAS 1974 which included provisions for inert gas systems on oil tankers.

In 1979 the Betelgeuse tanker with 42 French workers on board docked at the Whiddy Island Oil Terminal on 06th January, one day before my 4th birthday which I celebrated with my father. That evening, on 07th January he went on duty and never came home. The ship was not carrying inert gas systems because she did not have to.

SOLAS1974 was still sitting on Government shelves five years after agreement. It had not been ratified. Best practice was not applied.

50 people needlessly died. Over 2000 people turned up in Bantry last week from all over the world. I made sure that they did. 47 Wreathes were placed from all over the world to acknowledge that we must always:

use best practice, implement regulation, to protect our seafarers and protect our environment so as not to have our precious emergency services unnecessarily called out.

I would like to sincerely thank both the United Kingdom and the United States for such wonderful messages of support, and Alaska and Maine for your Wreathes which sit by the Monument in Bantry as I speak.

We must have respect for the hard work of the delegations of the IMO and we must help them to, first, get it right, and then ensure their regulations are implemented. I have done my best to do that, but there is a lot more work to be done, with significant regulation outstanding such as the Torremolinos Convention for Fishing Boat Safety.

In honour of those who died who sacrificed their lives, so that regulation could be implemented, I would like you to think for a moment of the victims and their families here in the Reform Club tonight, in particular British Surveyor, Michael Harris and his family, He had only just boarded the ship 5 minutes before the disaster.

I made a very important speech on behalf of the world's seafarers in Bantry last week and in support of the IMO's work and urged that outstanding Conventions be ratified as a matter of urgency. That speech is available on the internet if you google my name and the [Southern Star](#), my local newspaper. It serves as a stark reminder of what happens when we do not act in time.

Well done to you all for all your hard work over the last two days. With those who I have seen speaking and here tonight I am sure all the work will turn into something more and contribute to progress and initiatives that will make a difference.

It is quite clear to me from my experience and our progress that:

Together we will always make a Difference

It has been a huge honour for me to speak here tonight, and I thank you for that unbelievable privilege.

Thank You.

Michael Kingston

The Reform Club

London

18.01.2019

For further reference to the Commemoration in Bantry, Co Cork, Ireland please see the following:

'Home from the Sea' [video](#) sung in the Church by School Children of Bantry with the families (A famous Irish Song about a life boat that goes out to the rescue – they think all is lost, and all come home, all saved, at dawn)

Michael Kingston Speech on the Southern Star [Home Page](#):

In the Cemetery Sweet Bantry Bay was sung by Mary Daly. Here is the [video](#):

Michael Kingston article in the Southern Star:

[We cannot bring back those who died ... but we can honour them for their incredible sacrifice'](#)