



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



Keeping Pace with Fast-Evolving Maritime Legal World

Attorney-General and Chief Justice Sophia AB Akuffo has commended the commitment of the Ghana Shippers' Authority (GSA) to maritime law education for judges of her country's Superior Courts and urged the organisation to expand its scope to include members of the Ghana Bar Association.

In a recent address to open the 12th Maritime Law Seminar for Judges of the Superior Courts in Accra, Ms Akuffo commented: "This is particularly reinforced by the fact that lawyers are officers of the courts and therefore building their capacity in this discipline will go a long way to improve the justice delivery system."

According to overseas media, Ms Akuffo noted the practice of maritime merchants was rapidly evolving in the modern world, with technology advancement and increased globalisation introducing new challenges and disputes requiring new jurisprudence.

To dispense commercial justice in such a fast-paced environment, a greater number of judges must appreciate the peculiar nature of the industry in which the disputes arise, she reportedly said.

"It is in this regard that the Maritime Law Seminar must be seen as necessary to appraise our distinguished judges of the rudiments of maritime law ...," said Ms Akuffo.

Although noting the ocean was classified as common heritage of all humankind, it was expected to be managed peaceably and in a manner that benefitted all, she continued. Ocean governance – particularly maritime boundary delimitation – therefore continued to be fraught with a myriad of disputes that frequently threaten peaceful co-existence among nations.

In this vein, Ms Akuffo stated that the recent maritime boundary dispute between Ghana and La Cote d'Ivoire "could have had serious consequences on our relationship with our neighbour, but for the wise decision of our leaders".

Ms Akuffo also observed that the advent of the Ghana Paperless Port project, increase in cargo due to micro and macro-economic policies and other maritime reforms and activities have generated many socio-economic challenges associated with positive impacts.

She reiterated the need for a "vibrant, credible, effective and efficient judiciary that can deal with the complex disputes that may emerge as a result of these ever-increasing maritime activities".

In response, GSA chief executive Benonita Bismarck assured Justices of her organisation's continued commitment and support towards the organisation of the Maritime Law Seminar.

According to the GSA, the seminar provides a platform to "update the knowledge base of the Justices of the Superior Courts of Ghana to adequately prepare them for the challenges of interpretation and application of both domestic and international law on maritime issues".

December 2019