IOI Award of the Elisabeth Mann Borgese Medal to HE Ban Ki-moon

The International Ocean Institute (IOI) established in 1972 and headquartered at the University of Malta, has conferred on the Secretary-General of the United Nations HE Mr Ban Ki-moon, the IOI’s Elisabeth Mann Borgese Medal in recognition of his contribution and leadership in placing the Ocean on the sustainable development agenda.

The award ceremony was held at the University of Malta’s Valletta Campus. Present were Dr Awni Behnam, Honorary President of the IOI; Professor Alfred Vella, Pro-Rector for Academic Affairs, University of Malta; Antonella Vassallo, Managing Director of IOI HQ; other distinguished guests as well as the participants of the current IOI Training Programme on Regional Ocean Governance for the Mediterranean, Black, Baltic and Caspian Seas and the students following the MA Degree in Ocean Governance offered jointly by the Faculty of Laws and the IOI.

The medal was conferred on the Secretary-General for his work in securing the successful launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the stand-alone goal on the oceans – SDG 14 concerning the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development.

The mission of the IOI is to ensure the sustainability of the Ocean as “the source of life” and to uphold and expand the principle of the Common Heritage as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; to promote the concept of *Pacem in Maribus* – peace in the Ocean and its management and conservation for the benefit of future generations; to promote the concept of Ocean Governance, including Integrated Ocean Policy, for planning and management of the oceans at national, regional and global level.
Malta’s first crowdfunding platform goes live

Aspiring entrepreneurs in Malta can finally crowdfund their business ideas through the island’s first crowdfunding platform ZAAR. This is a project spearheaded by the Foundation for the Promotion of Entrepreneurial Initiatives (FPEI) which was set up jointly by the Malta Business Bureau and the University of Malta. ZAAR believes that great ideas should go far and its mission is to provide the space for that to happen. ZAAR stands by its values in order to offer the best space for idea creatives and supporters to contribute to its platform. ZAAR’s values are trust, reliability and knowledge. ZAAR is the first offering a donation/reward-based crowdfunding platform to promote entrepreneurship in Malta and support local start-ups. ZAAR offers an alternative to raise finance for projects and business ideas. It is a corruption of the word ‘zghar’ in Maltese meaning ‘small’. It has a dual meaning: starting from a small idea (the entrepreneurial side); the ‘supporters’ donate the equivalent of spare (small) change to back the idea they believe in.

The recently launched website seeks to address the fact that 30% of local enterprises find it difficult to access the finance they need to develop their products, according to a 2013 study by the Malta Business Bureau.

“ZAAR is the perfect platform for people with good ideas. Besides giving you the money you need to start your business, successful crowdfunding also gives you the confidence you need to persevere and see things through, safe in the knowledge that your idea has the necessary support,” said ZAAR manager Karl Grech.

He added that crowdfunding had become highly popular abroad thanks to sites like Kickstarter, Indiegogo and GoFundMe. However, it was only now through ZAAR that local business owners have the opportunity to tap into the local crowdfunding market.

“Our platform is designed to address a particular niche for causes that strike a chord within our local community and which perhaps would not necessarily pitch well internationally,” said Chairman George Vella.

Crowdfunding allows ideas to take flight by raising small contributions from a large group of people. Budding business owners also get to retain 100% of their equity instead of selling off parts of their enterprise to larger investors. This is because people who contribute to a crowdfunding campaign receive rewards rather than shares.

ZAAR will also be running workshops to help entrepreneurs maximise their time on the platform.
A Time to Celebrate

The University of Malta is celebrating the success of its students. This year over 3,400 graduated, 1,300 of whom at postgraduate level. For another consecutive year, the number of research doctoral graduates has increased with 27 candidates obtaining their Ph.D.

The role of the University is not simply to train graduates in the skills needed today so they can be easily pigeon-holed into jobs currently on the market. The University’s mission is to prepare graduates who are flexible and easily re-trainable to work in different situations: graduates who will be ready to embrace the skills needed for tomorrow’s (still largely unknown) needs. These are essential qualities which graduates need in today’s fast evolving knowledge-based society.

Confucius Institute outstanding Achievement Award for UoM Professor

Xiamen University is the partner University of sixteen universities worldwide that have a Confucius Institute at their respective institutions. At this year’s annual meeting of the directors of these Institutes, Xiamen University offered its 2015 Confucius Institute Outstanding Achievement Award to Professor Anthony J. Frendo, the local director of the Institute at the University of Malta. Xiamen University wanted to show its appreciation at the way Professor Frendo ran the Institute and its various programmes of studies, as well as for his fostering collaborative exchanges between Xiamen University and UoM. The award was given in absentia since Professor Frendo could not be present at the meeting.

Season's Greetings to all!