

Speech for Additional Director General

International Day for Women in Maritime 2026

Theme: "From Policy to Practice: Advancing Gender Equality"

Opening

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to address this distinguished gathering on the occasion of the *International Day for Women in Maritime*.

This year's theme "*From Policy to Practice: Advancing Gender Equality*" is both timely and important. It reminds us that the real success of any policy lies not in its announcement, but in its implementation, where it touches lives, shapes careers and transforms institutions.

Today, I would like to briefly reflect on how we are translating this vision into reality across the maritime sector.

1. Sagar Mein Samman

In simple terms, **Sagar Mein Samman** is our national framework to make maritime careers safer, more accessible, and more equitable for women.

It moves gender inclusion from a **concept to a structured policy system**.

At present, women constitute **less than 0.5% of India's maritime workforce**, which clearly shows the scale of the challenge.

To address this, the initiative establishes clear guidelines that ensure safety, equal opportunity and long-term career growth.

It brings uniformity across all stakeholders—training institutes, shipping companies, crewing agencies and regulatory bodies—so that gender inclusion is implemented consistently across the ecosystem.

Key focus areas include:

- Ensuring **safe working conditions onboard and ashore**
- Providing **equal access to education, training and employment opportunities**
- Establishing **clear reporting and grievance mechanisms**
- Enabling **transparent career progression pathways**

- Creating **standardised inclusion-oriented practices across institutions**

Sagar Mein Samman provides the policy framework – but the real question is: *How do we ensure it is implemented on ground?*

This brings us to the next step, **translating policy into practice**.

2. Five-Year Action Plan – Turning Policy into Practice

The **Five-Year Action Plan (2026–2030)** is the roadmap that converts intent into measurable action.

It ensures that gender inclusion is not just discussed but **systematically implemented in phases** across the maritime sector.

The approach begins with awareness and gradually moves towards institutionalisation, ensuring that each stage builds on the previous one.

It focuses on embedding inclusion into training systems, infrastructure, governance and industry practices, so that equality becomes part of everyday functioning.

Key elements of implementation include:

- **Awareness and sensitisation programmes** across maritime institutions
- Introduction of a **National Maritime Gender Framework**
- Implementation of a **Zero-Tolerance Policy and Code of Conduct**
- **Infrastructure improvements** for safer and gender-neutral workplaces
- Integration of **gender modules into maritime training programmes**
- **Financial support, scholarships and outreach initiatives** for women cadets

While systems and policies are essential, inclusion must also ensure that women are able to **sustain and thrive** in maritime careers.

This brings us to the importance of **holistic well-being and support systems**.

3. Sagar Mein Yog – Supporting Sustainable Careers

Sagar Mein Yog focuses on the **well-being of seafarers**, ensuring that they remain physically and mentally strong throughout their careers.

The maritime profession involves long voyages, isolation, and demanding working conditions. These challenges affect everyone but addressing them is especially important when creating an inclusive environment for women.

This initiative introduces a structured wellness framework covering multiple dimensions such as physical, mental, emotional and social well-being – across the entire seafarer lifecycle.

By integrating these practices into training and onboard routines, we are making wellness a part of maritime culture.

Key components include:

- Focus on **physical, mental, emotional and psychological wellness**
- Integration into **pre-sea, at-sea and post-sea stages**
- Development of **standardised and scalable wellness modules**
- Use of **digital platforms for accessibility even at sea**
- Aim to improve **resilience, safety and productivity**

Well-being ensures sustainability – but equally important is assurance that **concerns will be heard and addressed promptly**.

This leads us to the next pillar – **institutional grievance redressal**.

4. 24×7 Grievance Redressal – Ensuring Trust and Accountability

In simple terms, the **Grievance Redressal Framework** ensures that every seafarer has a **reliable system to raise and resolve concerns**.

Earlier, complaints were handled through fragmented channels, leading to delays and inconsistency. This framework addresses that gap by creating a **structured, transparent and time-bound system**.

It is particularly important for women, as it provides a strong institutional mechanism to address issues related to safety, workplace conditions and welfare.

The system is designed to ensure fairness, accountability and continuous monitoring.

Key features include:

- **Single structured mechanism** for lodging grievances
- **Categorisation and prioritisation** based on seriousness

- **Time-bound resolution with escalation mechanisms**
- **Clear accountability at each level of handling**
- **Transparency in communication and outcomes**
- Coverage across employment, training, welfare and safety issues

With policy, implementation, well-being and grievance support in place, we now move to the larger perspective – **collective responsibility**.

5. Collective Responsibility – The Way Forward

Gender equality in maritime cannot be achieved by policy alone, it requires **participation from all stakeholders**.

It is about:

- Industry adopting inclusive practices
- Institutions ensuring fairness and safety
- Colleagues building a respectful work culture
- And most importantly, women feeling confident to pursue maritime careers

Conclusion:

When all these elements come together, inclusion becomes not an effort – but a norm.

Closing

Colleagues,

The journey from **policy to practice** is not a single step – it is a continuous process.

Let us reaffirm our commitment:

- To create a maritime sector that is **safe and inclusive**
- To ensure **equal and transparent opportunities** for all
- And to build a system where **every woman in maritime feels empowered**

If we remain committed to this path, India will emerge as a **global benchmark for gender-inclusive maritime development**.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

