



INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA
TRIBUNAL INTERNATIONAL DU DROIT DE LA MER

Press Release

(Issued by the Registrar)

STATEMENTS DELIVERED AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING OF THE TRIBUNAL

Hamburg, 3 July 2000. The official ceremony to mark the opening of the permanent headquarters of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea took place today.

The guests were addressed by His Excellency Mr. P. Chandrasekhara Rao, President of the Tribunal, Her Excellency Mrs. Herta Däubler-Gmelin, Minister of Justice of the Federal Republic of Germany, His Excellency Mr. Ortwin Runde, First Mayor of Hamburg and His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, following the opening statement by His Excellency Mr. Gritakumar E. Chitty, Registrar of the Tribunal.

The statements are reproduced below, in order of delivery.

Mr. Gritakumar E. Chitty:

Today, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany; and the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg jointly celebrate the Opening of the Headquarters building of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

A few moments ago, the Headquarters building was handed over to the Tribunal with the symbolic handing over of the keys of the building to the President of the Tribunal who entrusted them to my custody as the Registrar.

This marks the final step of a process, the start of which goes back more than 20 years. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany had then submitted the candidature of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg for the seat of the Tribunal, to the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, which subsequently voted in favour of Germany and the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

Today's festivity takes place in the presence and with the participation of His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who is the

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depository of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; with the participation of Her Excellency Mrs. Herta Däubler-Gmelin, the Federal Minister of Justice of the Federal Republic of Germany, representing the host country, His Excellency Mr. Ortwin Runde, the First Mayor of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, representing the host city, His Excellency Mr. Peter Donigi, the President of the Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and other prominent representatives of Governments and of the host country, who are gathered here today, and also in the presence of the specially invited guests and the representatives of the media.

I wish to convey to the meeting the regrets communicated by three Judges of the Tribunal, Judge Lihai Zhao, Judge Choon-Ho Park and Judge Vicente Marotta Rangel, who are unable to attend today's event. They have asked me to convey their good wishes and to felicitate all participants in this celebration.

On 18 October 1996 the Tribunal met for the first time in open session and the Judges took their oath of office in the City Hall of Hamburg. The foundation stone for this building was laid the same day.

The President of the Tribunal, His Excellency Mr. Chandrasekhara Rao will now address this august gathering.

Mr. P. Chandrasekhara Rao:

Mr. Secretary-General, Madam Minister of Justice of Germany, Mr. First Mayor, Mr. President of the Meeting of States Parties, Judges of the Tribunal, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

We have gathered here today to celebrate the official opening of the building into which the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea will move soon. On behalf of the Tribunal, I extend a warm welcome to all the persons participating in this opening ceremony. To the representatives of French-speaking countries: je vous souhaite la bienvenue. We are indeed privileged to have the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, in our midst on this important occasion in the life of the Tribunal. We are particularly thankful to the Minister of Justice of the Federal Republic of Germany, Her Excellency Dr. Herta Däubler-Gmelin, the First Mayor of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Mr. Ortwin Runde, the President of the Meeting of States Parties to the Law of the Sea Convention, His Excellency Mr. Peter Donigi, and the Legal Counsel of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Hans Corell, for their participation in today's ceremony. We are also honoured by the presence of the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, the Minister of State from Syria, representatives of the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Justice, diplomatic and consular representatives, senior German government officials, officers of other national and international courts, legal advisers of Foreign Offices, senior officials of UN organizations,

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distinguished academics, representatives of trade and commerce and other distinguished participants.

We in the Tribunal, like others, are struck by the silent grandeur of this building. It is ideally suited for judicial work. We wish to convey our appreciation to the firm of Baron Alexander and Baroness Emanuela von Branca, the architects of this building, for their design. The international community should be especially grateful to the Federal Republic of Germany and the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg for their joint efforts in erecting this building in such a delightful setting on the banks of the River Elbe at considerable expense.

I must place on record our appreciation to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg for the excellent support the Tribunal received from them at all stages of our work. At the local level, both the present First Mayor of Hamburg, Mr. Ortwin Runde, and his predecessor in office, Mr. Henning Voscherau, have been a source of strength to us. We are also thankful to Ambassador Kastrup, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, and his predecessor in office, for the help extended to us.

I am very happy to announce that the Tribunal and the Federal Republic of Germany have been able to make good progress in negotiations concerning the Headquarters Agreement and the Agreement on the Occupancy and Use of the Premises of the Tribunal in a spirit of good will and cooperation. It is our hope that we would soon reach agreement in these matters.

The official inauguration of the Tribunal took place in the City Hall of Hamburg on 16 October 1996. Since then, the Tribunal functioned from its temporary premises provided to it by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. The foundation stone for the Headquarters building here was laid on 18 October 1996 in the presence of, among others, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Tribunal is happy that its seat is in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, which is a well-known port city reputed for its long tradition in international shipping and maritime trade. As the former Secretary-General put it at the inaugural session of the Tribunal, I quote: “this great city symbolizes humankind’s eternal relationship with the sea – as a source of life, as a means of commerce, as the common heritage of all the peoples of the globe” – unquote.

We are thankful to the people of Hamburg for extending to the judges and officers of the Tribunal courtesies that make living in Hamburg a pleasurable experience. On behalf of the Tribunal, I assure the people of Hamburg that it shall be our constant endeavour to blend well with the natural fabric of life in Hamburg. We propose to make the building accessible to the public on days to be specified soon.

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The Tribunal does not enjoy an organic link with the United Nations. Nevertheless, it owes its existence to the efforts of the United Nations towards establishing a new legal order for ocean space. In recognition of its special relationship with the United Nations, the Tribunal and the United Nations concluded in 1997 an Agreement on Cooperation and Relationship. The Tribunal has been participating in all UN meetings of relevance to the Tribunal. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Legal Counsel to the United Nations and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea have all helped us on appropriate occasions. The Tribunal looks forward to cementing its links with the United Nations.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea established the Tribunal to serve as a world court and play a central role in the resolution of law of the sea disputes. The Convention does not provide a single body for adjudicating law of the sea disputes; it provides for a number of alternative mechanisms for the settlement of disputes. Nevertheless, the Tribunal, composed as it is of persons of "recognised competence in the field of the law of the sea", is accorded, by the Convention, a prominent position in the matter of settlement of law of the sea disputes. The Tribunal is given a special competence to hear applications for the prompt release of vessels and crews under article 292 and to deal with requests for provisional measures under article 290, paragraph 5, of the Convention. The Seabed Disputes Chamber of the Tribunal also enjoys exclusive jurisdiction in respect of certain disputes referred to in the Convention. As underlined by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/31 of 16 November 1999, the Tribunal has an "important role and authority concerning the interpretation or application" of the United Nations Convention.

There is no conflict between the Tribunal and other bodies competent to adjudicate under the United Nations Convention. When providing for more than one universal court, the makers of the Convention did not see any danger to the unity of international law. These bodies are intended to complement each other in the global system for the peaceful settlement of disputes. They fulfil complementary needs. They are not in any hierarchical relationship. It is to be hoped that each international tribunal or court, though autonomous in itself, will not ignore precedents of other bodies, thus ensuring the harmonious development of the law of the sea. For its part, where appropriate, the Tribunal, in its Judgments, relied upon or referred to the precedents set by other international courts and tribunals. It is in the interests of sound legal jurisprudence that adjudicatory bodies show mutual respect to each other's decisions.

It is now just over three years since the Tribunal was inaugurated in October 1996. During this short period, much has been achieved. The Tribunal adopted its Rules for carrying out its functions, the Resolution on the Internal Judicial Practice of the Tribunal and the Guidelines concerning the Preparation and Presentation of Cases before the Tribunal. Most importantly, the Tribunal has become a functioning judicial institution. It heard five cases and was able to deliver its Orders and Judgments in these cases within remarkably short periods. This should remain a matter of special satisfaction to litigants. Though the Tribunal is a standing body, it meets in Hamburg only when the business so

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demands. Judges assemble in Hamburg on very short notice and oftentimes work without breaks, thus promoting dispute settlement without unnecessary delay or expense. The Tribunal has made every effort to be user-friendly. We are happy that the UN General Assembly noted with satisfaction what it called the continued contribution of the Tribunal to the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the Convention.

Of the 133 States Parties to the Convention, 25 States Parties have so far filed declarations under article 287 of the Convention with regard to choice of procedure for the settlement of disputes. It may be that, in the early years of the Tribunal, there was some hesitation in accepting the jurisdiction of the Tribunal on an exclusive or preferential basis. Now that the Tribunal has established itself as an active and effective body in deciding law of the sea disputes, it would be opportune for States to consider again the choices open to them in the matter of dispute settlement mechanisms.

Our Library is in its early stages of development. On this occasion, I would like to express our gratitude to the individuals, research institutions and organizations that have donated publications to our Library in the past. I wish to acknowledge in particular the significant contribution of the Korea Foundation that enabled us to complete our holdings for many journals essential to the work of the Tribunal. The Tribunal would welcome further expressions of support as we endeavour to create a reference library to serve our present and future requirements.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is of fundamental importance for the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security, as well as for the sustainable use and development of the seas and oceans and their resources. The Convention on the Law of the Sea is not, however, an end in itself; its successful working depends on, among other things, the conclusion of detailed agreements on promotion of cooperation at the regional and international levels, as well as enactments of national law in States Parties to the Convention.

There are also major challenges facing the international community in the field of the law of the sea: over-exploitation of marine living resources, degradation of the marine environment, dumping of nuclear waste and toxic substances into the sea, piracy and armed robbery at sea, threats to international peace and security from disputed maritime boundaries, etc. The Report of the United Nations Secretary-General of 20 March 2000 documents these issues in full. The Secretary-General's efforts in support of the Convention and in its effective implementation deserve full support.

The United Nations General Assembly has taken timely initiative to establish an open-ended informal consultative process to achieve better integration on ocean affairs. This initiative reflects, at the turn of the millennium, the importance of the oceans and seas to mankind. The first meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, held from 30 May to 2 June 2000 in New York, underlined in a conscious manner the current priorities that need urgent attention. The outcome of this process will have a bearing on the application of the Convention and is

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thus of interest to all of us. It is heartening to note the decision of the recent Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations on the Law of the Sea to request the UN General Assembly to establish a Trust Fund to assist deserving developing countries in the cases before the Tribunal.

There is nothing abnormal in States having differences of opinion with regard to the interpretation or application of the Convention. All are subject to the rule of law as enshrined in the Convention and are required to compose their differences by having recourse to the systems incorporated in the Convention for settlement of disputes. Threats to the Convention arise when States pursue unilateral action de hors the Convention. It shall be the constant endeavour of the Tribunal to serve as the upholder of the Convention.

The Tribunal has demonstrated its ability to deal efficiently with cases submitted to it. It is ready to deal with future cases with the same efficiency. I am confident that this splendid new building will assist the Tribunal in carrying out its important tasks. On behalf of the Tribunal, may I say how grateful we are to the Federal Republic of Germany, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and the people of Germany for dedicating this building in the service of the cause of settlement of law of the sea disputes by peaceful means. To them, I say: *der Seegerichtshof und ich danken Ihnen recht herzlich.*

Mrs. Herta Däubler-Gmelin:

Mr. Secretary-General, dear Mrs. Annan, Mr. President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Mr. President of the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and First Mayor, Judges, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

My best greetings to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, its friends and its guests!

It is a great honour and a special pleasure for me to welcome you here today in the Tribunal's permanent building and to convey to you the best wishes and greetings of the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Gerhard Schröder, and the whole Federal Government.

We wish you all the best not only for your work but also for your forthcoming move to this really beautiful court building on the impressive and equally beautiful Hamburg here at the Elbchaussee.

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We all are particularly delighted – and proud – that you, Secretary-General, are here today to attend this opening ceremony. Your presence underlines the special importance of the International Tribunal as an essential factor for the peaceful use of the seas which is, as we all know, guaranteed by the United Nations. And – of course – your presence, Secretary-General, gives you the opportunity to see for yourself that we, the Federal Government, have kept to our special obligations after the decision in favour of Hamburg as the seat of this important Tribunal. As President Chandrasekhara Rao has rightly pointed out, we actively supported this decision, from the very beginning of negotiations in the Preparatory Commission.

We all are aware of the great importance of this Tribunal, which we have indeed supported from the very first beginning of negotiations in the Preparatory Commission, and of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which contains, for the first time, a global maritime regime that is really accepted on a universal basis. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea applies the rules of this convention as a central body for dispute resolution, as a permanent court with its own powers, where states, and – in relation to seabed mining – also other legal entities can initiate proceedings.

And we all are equally aware that this tribunal enjoys the best of all reputations. It is well accepted and appreciated – though it has only been in existence for a relatively short time. That is why you, President Chandreskhara Rao, were absolutely right when you pointed out, in your speech to the 54th United Nations General Assembly on 22 November 1999, that the International Tribunal has well succeeded in consolidating its worldwide special position.

Three and a half years ago, shortly after the Tribunal started its work sceptical voices could, indeed, be heard, that there would not be many cases where states would turn to the Tribunal, since – as we well know – contracting states are free to have recourse for dispute resolution to institutions other than the International Tribunal, such as the International Court of Justice in The Hague or an arbitration tribunal.

Today we observe that these fears were unjustified. Of those states making a declaration, under article 287 of the UN Convention, on the choice of means for the settlement of disputes, two-thirds have decided to choose the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Most of these states have even given the International Tribunal their first preference.

Just two weeks after the adoption of the Tribunal's Rules – the first case came up: the "Saiga" case.

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You remember: “Saiga”, a ship owned by a Cypriot shipping company and managed by a Scottish one, was seized by Guinea in its exclusive economic zone – a truly international case. At the time of the incident in dispute, it had been chartered by a Swiss company and was sailing under the flag of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The crew came from Ukraine; other workers were Senegalese citizens, and the cargo was owned by yet another Swiss company.

This case was also complicated from the legal point of view: questions of vessel registration, of arrest, of hot pursuit, of the use of force and of compensation had to be clarified – problems calling in each case for new solutions and approaches.

Not only this first case demonstrated the special and difficult questions the International Tribunal has to deal with in its daily work, but also the following ones, be it the interesting “Southern Bluefin Tuna” cases or the “Camouco” case and I am sure others will follow.

I am very confident that the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea will successfully continue to intensify its activities in the settlement of disputes and in the development of the law.

This will be ensured by the judges who, as the most prominent and knowledgeable personalities and experts of the world’s major legal systems and of the law of the sea, are not only excellently qualified for their function, but are also genuine custodians of the international law of the sea.

That is why the United Nations General Assembly, at its 54th session last year, took special note of the important contribution being made by the International Tribunal towards the peaceful settlement of disputes and it expressed its respect and appreciation for the Tribunal and its work. I think we all fully agree with this assessment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this important international tribunal, of course, needed appropriate accommodation.

For this reason, in the spring of 1989, the Federal Republic of Germany organized an international competition. The winners, the architects Alexander and Emanuela von Branca, have built this wonderful and really impressive building. Mrs. von Branca, fortunately, can be with us today and I want to give her a warm welcome and many thanks for this wonderful building.

At the first jury meeting UN Undersecretary Nandan expressed what he imagined an ideal court building to be: it would have to express harmony and an atmosphere of peace and justice for the high seas. Really a great challenge.

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Today, President Chandrasekhara Rao, Secretary-General Annan, Ladies and Gentlemen, we know and we can see and feel that with their creation the architects have met that challenge. Thank you for this, Mrs. von Branca, and thanks to all – the managers, the workers, the craftsmen – for giving shape and form to the initial vision.

We all do wish that you, President Chanrasekhara Rao, esteemed members of the Tribunal and all members of your staff will enjoy working in this wonderful building. I am personally convinced that the specific and renowned Hanseatic working environment will inspire decisions that underscore the excellent reputation and importance of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

I wish you all the best – that the spirit of liveliness, peace and hope which we experienced with the children down in the hall, singing the "Nienstedten Song" will live on in this building.

Mr. Ortwin Runde:

Mr. Secretary General, Mr. President, Madam Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is now almost 20 years since the day - it was 21st August 1981 – that Hamburg was designated the new seat of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Nearly two decades, filled with plans, preparations and make-shift solutions.

Today, this phase has now finally come to an end.

Hamburg is delighted about that and we welcome all those who have come to celebrate this significant day with us.

Another reason to call this an important day is that the city has been enriched with a most attractive example of the architect's craft.

My thanks to all those who were and are involved in this project. In order not to leave anyone out - neither planners nor implementers - I shall not single out anyone at all for special mention. Thank you, each and every one of you.

The building's location is itself full of symbolism. From here - up above the Elbe, directly overlooking one of the world's major shipping lanes – the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea keeps watch on international shipping. And judgments will be handed down in this room.

The Town Hall of Hamburg may, however, claim the honour of being the place where the very first ruling was made.

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On 4th December 1997, in the Great Salon of the Town Hall, the judges passed their first verdict. The fact that the Town Hall was used for this purpose is, I believe, an especially apt way to emphasize the fact that maritime law has always played an important role in Hamburg and continues to do so.

Ever since 1189 - when Emperor Barbarossa granted the city the privilege of free access to the seas - maritime law has been an integral part of the jurisdiction of our City State. And in the past it was not unusual for the Senate of Hamburg to be asked to act as arbitrator in legal disputes involving maritime matters.

It is only logical that in this day and age the law of the sea is especially important for a world port and trading city such as Hamburg. All in all, Hamburg was the candidate that seemed especially pre-destined to be chosen as the right place to establish the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Of course, we first had, literally, to convince "the rest of the world" of this. But - as one can see - we succeeded in this task. We are gratified that the signatory states to the Convention on the Law of the Sea felt Hamburg provided a worthy setting for the Tribunal. And I may assure you: we count it an honour to host this court of law. Hamburg will live up to the high expectations that are placed in the host of such an institution.

The International Tribunal has the judges, it has a building - what it needs now is general acceptance.

We cannot expect this to happen "over night" and it will take time to grow. But it will come, we know that from the experience of other international courts.

With every new case that is brought before the Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, the community of nations will take more and more notice of the court's work.

And since the oceans of the world will become much more important in the 21st century - whether as transportation routes or reservoirs of natural resources - many legal questions will need to be clarified. The forecasts are that the Tribunal will not be able to complain about lack of work!

I congratulate the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea on its new home.

I hope that all those who use these rooms will find them as pleasant as I do and that the building provides a good setting for people to work in.

This institution will stimulate new ideas. It will be a stimulus that helps create a new culture of maritime law - which will then be associated with the name of our city. And so there will be further confirmation: That Hamburg was the right place for the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea to cast anchor.

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Mr. Kofi Annan:

President Chandrasekhara Rao, Madam Minister of the Federal Ministry of Justice, Mr. President of the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and First Mayor of Hamburg, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured and delighted to join you for this solemn and yet very happy event, in this beautiful City which is proud to call itself "Free and Hanseatic".

Those titles evoke a great history, and form in themselves an eloquent manifesto. The Hanse, that great league of north European trading cities to which Hamburg once belonged, was almost a forerunner of the United Nations. It brought together, for mutual assistance and defence, communities whose way of life was founded on sea-borne commerce, freely transacted by free men under agreed rules.

For them, as for all of us in today's global economy, the Law of the Sea was no luxury but essential to their survival. What more fitting location could there be, then, for the permanent seat of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea? And what a pleasure it is, today, to celebrate the installation of the Tribunal in that permanent seat!

I think we all knew, when the Law of the Sea Conference decided 20 years ago to accept Germany's offer to host the Tribunal, that we would get something pretty impressive. And I think we have it. But we could hardly have imagined an edifice quite so splendid, or so appropriate to the theme of peace and justice in the oceans.

Having just completed a tour of the premises, I can assure you that the building, besides being meticulously crafted to serve the specialised needs of this institution, is a work of art in its own right. It has a timeless quality, which no doubt it owes in part to the tranquil parkland setting, but in larger part to the genius of the architects. They have achieved a remarkable harmony between the ancient trees so carefully preserved, the renovated villa in all its glory, and the glass, metal and stone of the modern structure they have added.

We must all feel particular gratitude to the City, and indeed to the German people. By establishing the Tribunal in Hamburg, and generously endowing this magnificent new Headquarters Building, they have shown once again their strong commitment to promoting the rule of international law and preventing armed conflict. They have shown that they understand how much world peace depends on the existence of robust mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Tribunal, dedicated to the peaceful resolution of international disputes relating to the oceans, is such a mechanism. It is the keystone of the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention, which in turn is one of the UN's greatest achievements. And, like the International Court of Justice, it is central to the regime of international peace and security that has evolved since the United Nations Charter was adopted.

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The Law of the Sea Convention, now almost universally accepted, provides the essential framework for the rule of law in the marine sphere, governing the uses of the sea and access to its resources, and regulating inter-state relations. It is sometimes called the Constitution for the Oceans.

Under that Constitution, the Tribunal plays a key role in the uniquely binding dispute settlement procedure. It is the central forum available - to States, to certain international organizations, and even to some corporations - for resolving disputes about how the Convention should be interpreted and applied.

When the Convention was adopted, the Secretary-General was entrusted with the task of starting up the Tribunal. The United Nations lent its staff to the new institution to assure it a successful start.

I myself, like my predecessors, have maintained a keen interest in developments relating to the Convention and its institutions. I am delighted to note that in its first four years the Tribunal has already built a reputation among international lawyers as a modern court that can respond quickly.

In large part this is due to the outstanding quality of the judges, who have carried out their work in an expeditious, responsible and efficient manner. The Tribunal is indeed fortunate to have secured the services of members so eminent, and so learned in the law of the sea.

On a personal note, I take particular pride in the work of my countryman, Judge Thomas Mensah, who served as President of the Tribunal for its first three years. But I have no doubt at all, Mr. President, that under your able leadership the Tribunal will maintain the same record of excellence and success.

Credit is also due, of course, to the dedication and hard work of the Registrar, Mr. Gritakumar Chitty, his deputy, M. Philippe Gautier, and all their staff.

Naturally, recourse to international dispute resolution depends on the parties being ready to submit their differences to judicial decision. It is very encouraging that this Tribunal had more cases submitted to it in its first three years than any previous international court. It has dealt with a wide variety of cases, from both developing and developed countries, involving such matters as the prompt release of vessels and crew, the prescription of legally binding provisional measures, and more substantive issues concerning the rights and obligations of States under the Convention. And I think the Minister of Justice gave us a very detailed account of how complex some of those cases could be.

The record already shows that the Tribunal's decisions, once given, are put into effect. States, and other parties, recognise its authority and accept the objectivity of its

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interpretations and decisions, which are coming to form the core of international jurisprudence in the law of the sea.

I hope that more and more parties will be encouraged to make use of the Tribunal in settling their disputes, and also that States will support it - notably by giving it the financial security it needs. And I am glad to note the recommendation of the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, that a voluntary Trust Fund be established to assist States which have difficulty in meeting the costs of bringing a case before the Tribunal. Indeed it is vital that the Tribunal be fully accessible to all.

The Judges of the Tribunal, as well as the staff of the Registry, reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of the human family. That reminds us that societies and cultures can co-exist, blossom and flourish only when international law, firmly rooted in global values, is fully implemented and enforced. The Tribunal is there to help us implement an important aspect of international law, and so put those global values into practice.

Long may it continue to do so!

The Press Releases of the Tribunal, documents and other information are available on the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/los/> and from the Registry of the Tribunal.

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