

**Statement of Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the
occasion of the Ceremonial Inauguration of the Judges
18 October 1996**

I am honoured to be here today in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. This great city symbolises 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.

The family of nations warmly welcomes the invitation made by the Federal Republic of Germany to host the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea here in this Hanseatic City-State. This invitation, made in the 1970s, was a prominent step by Germany to declare its dedication to multilateralism in the pursuit of peace. The international community overwhelmingly voted in favour.

Now, more than 15 years later, the Law of the Sea Convention has given birth to this International Tribunal.

We celebrate today a truly historic event. We are here to witness the swearing-in of the twenty one Judges who constitute this International Tribunal, dedicated to resolve disputes of the seas and oceans and on the seafloor -- a jurisdiction which includes 75 % of the surface of our blue planet.

They are among the most prominent contributors to the creation of the Law of the Sea Convention which they will now apply. This is a situation without precedent in international law and from which the Tribunal and the international community can only benefit. On their shoulders the States Parties -- one hundred of them -- have placed the burden of the interpretation of the Convention and ensuring its consistent application.

With the establishment of this Tribunal we enter a new era. The Tribunal will be a modern institution upholding the Rule of Law not only between States but also among States, the International Seabed Authority, companies and individuals engaged in the exploitation of the international seabed area.

This Tribunal will be a dynamic institution having jurisdiction over matters which require immediate action. It has special competence to prescribe provisional measures when the ocean environment is seriously threatened. It can order the prompt release of arrested vessels on deposit of a bond. For all categories of disputes involving fisheries, communications, navigation and ocean pollution, special chambers can be set up to provide the most rapid and appropriate procedure.

Because maritime disputes can be a source of confrontation and conflict between States, the Tribunal has an important role to play in the building of an international society governed by the Rule of Law. The Law of the Sea Tribunal will be part of the system for the peaceful settlement of disputes as laid down by the founders of the United Nations. Though not an Organ of the United Nations the Tribunal finds its origin in efforts sponsored by the United Nations. As

a sign of this excellent linkage a relationship agreement should soon be signed between the Tribunal and the United Nations.

Let us now join in witnessing the swearing-in of this distinguished panel of eminent Judges.