

**Statement of Mr. Gritakumar E. Chitty, Registrar of the
International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, on the occasion of the
Opening of the Headquarters building of the Tribunal**

3 July 2000

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 depositary 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.