



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

Press Release

PRESIDENT HOFFMANN HIGHLIGHTS THE TRIBUNAL'S ABILITY TO HANDLE NEW CHALLENGES IN THE LAW OF THE SEA IN HIS FIRST IN-PERSON ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 9 December 2021 President Hoffmann gave the annual review of the work of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to the United Nations General Assembly during its consideration of agenda item 78(a) "Oceans and the law of the sea".



UN Photo/Manuel Elías

The President started his address by explaining how the Tribunal has responded to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, and indicated that the Tribunal has been working in both hybrid and in-person formats for the past two years. He recalled that the Tribunal has amended its Rules of procedure in order to provide, as an exceptional measure, for hearings, readings of judgments or meetings of the Tribunal to be held entirely or in part by video link.

Reporting on the judicial activity of the Tribunal and the cases currently on the docket, President Hoffmann gave a summary of the preliminary objections phase of the *Dispute concerning delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean*. The President indicated that, following the rendering of

the judgment on the Maldives' preliminary objections, in which the Special Chamber of the Tribunal concluded that it had "jurisdiction to adjudicate upon the dispute concerning the delimitation of the maritime boundary between the Parties in the Indian Ocean and that the claim submitted by Mauritius in this regard [was] admissible", the merits phase of the case had resumed and the Parties had filed their Memorial and Counter-Memorial in accordance with the time-limits set by Order of the President of the Special Chamber. President Hoffmann also informed the General Assembly about the latest developments in *The M/T "San Padre Pio"* (No. 2) Case (*Switzerland/Nigeria*), in which the opening of the oral proceedings had been postponed to a date to be fixed after consultations with the Parties.

Remarking on the fact that the Tribunal had celebrated its 25th anniversary in October, President Hoffmann noted that during the 25 years of its history, the Tribunal had established itself as the primary judicial body to which States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea turn when seeking peaceful settlement of their disputes concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention. In this regard, he stated that "[a]s confident as I am that the Tribunal will continue to resolve disputes in areas for which it has an established track record, I am equally optimistic about its prospects for handling new challenges in the law of the sea", such as climate change, ocean warming, ocean acidification and sea-level rise. Recognizing that the future of ocean governance is currently high on the agenda of the international community, he indicated his belief that the Tribunal "has the ability and willingness to retain its leading role in ensuring the harmonious application of the Convention as the law of the sea faces new conundrums in the future", whether in the exercise of its contentious or of its advisory jurisdiction.

President Hoffmann closed his address by outlining the continued importance of the capacity-building programmes run by the Tribunal, both the internship and fellowship programmes, together with the newly established Junior Professional Officer programme and the Legal Advisors Workshop (sponsored by the Republic of Korea), now planned for 2022.

The President's statement is available on the Tribunal's [website](#).

Note: The press releases of the Tribunal do not constitute official documents and are issued for information purposes only.

The press releases of the Tribunal, documents and other information are available on the Tribunal's website (<http://www.itlos.org>) and (<http://www.tidm.org>) and from the Registry of the Tribunal. Please contact Ms Julia Ritter or Mr Robert Steenkamp at: Am Internationalen Seegerichtshof 1, 22609 Hamburg, Germany, Tel.: +49 (40) 35607-227; Fax: +49 (40) 35607-245; E-mail: press@itlos.org