



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

Press Release

CEREMONY TO CELEBRATE THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRIBUNAL HELD IN BERLIN

The President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Judge Rüdiger Wolfrum, the Minister of Justice of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ms Brigitte Zypries, and the Senator of Justice of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Mr Carsten-Ludwig Lüdemann, addressed a gathering of representatives of the diplomatic corps, the Federal Ministry of Justice and the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs at a ceremony to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Tribunal on Monday, 18 September 2006, at the Representation of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg in Berlin. The ceremony was the first in a series of events which will take place over the coming weeks to mark the tenth anniversary of the inauguration of the Tribunal.

Established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to play a central role in the peaceful settlement of disputes relating to the law of the sea, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea was officially inaugurated on 18 October 1996. Since then thirteen cases have been submitted to the Tribunal relating to, *inter alia*, freedom of navigation, prompt release of vessels and their crews, protection and preservation of the marine environment, the commissioning of a nuclear facility and the movement of radioactive materials, land reclamation activities, fisheries, nationality of claims, use of force in law enforcement activities, hot pursuit and the question of the genuine link between the vessel and its flag State. While the majority of the cases dealt with by the Tribunal so far concerned prompt release and provisional measures proceedings, the types of disputes which may be submitted to the Tribunal under the Convention – or any other agreement relating to the purposes of the Convention – involve all legal matters concerning the ocean space and its resources, such as fishing, pollution, maritime delimitation, navigation, status of ships, scientific research, and exploration and exploitation of natural resources.

In his welcome address, Senator Lüdemann stated that “[T]he International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ... is ... of fundamental importance in strengthening international peace. It is in the interests of all those who use the seas to publicize, promote and take advantage of the possibilities offered by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for the peaceful settlement of disputes.”

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In her address, Minister Zypries stated that “[W]ith the founding of this Tribunal ten years ago, the United Nations established a forum not only for the peaceful settlement of disputes. In the long term, the Tribunal is also the focal point for the consolidation and further development of the international law of the sea. There is no doubt in my mind that the importance of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and also its effects on peace will assume greater importance in the future.” Referring to the support of the Federal Republic of Germany for both the Tribunal and the International Criminal Court, the Minister of Justice emphasised Germany’s commitment to “ensure that international relations are increasingly subject to legal mechanisms. This is a development that we wish to promote – whether it is a question of prosecuting crimes or of the law of the sea.”

President Wolfrum closed the ceremony with a statement outlining the achievements of the Tribunal in its first ten years and underscored the Tribunal’s potential as the one international specialized judicial organ for the settlement of law of the sea related disputes. He concluded his statement with the words “in its first decade of existence, the Tribunal has already made a substantial contribution to the development of international law. Under the Convention and all other agreements conferring jurisdiction upon it, the Tribunal has the competence and the means to deal with a wide range of disputes and is well equipped to discharge its functions speedily, efficiently and cost-effectively. I hope that the Tribunal is called upon in the next decade to realise its full potential.”

Further events to mark the tenth anniversary of the Tribunal including a formal ceremony and a symposium on ‘The Jurisprudence of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea: Assessment and Prospects’ will be held at the seat of the Tribunal in Hamburg on 29 and 30 September 2006. Information may be found on the website of the Tribunal.

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