



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

Press Release

**PRESIDENT HOFFMANN'S STATEMENT TO THE
THIRTY-FIRST MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA**

**"THE TRIBUNAL IS LOOKING FORWARD TO ITS
TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY"**

Today, Judge Albert Hoffmann, President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, presented his statement to the thirty-first Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea via video link. The Meeting, which is taking place from 21 to 25 June 2021, is combining in-person meetings at the United Nations Headquarters in New York with virtual meetings. President Hoffmann's statement introduced the Tribunal's annual report for 2020 and provided information on the judicial work of the Tribunal, organizational matters, capacity building and the upcoming twenty-fifth anniversary of the Tribunal, which will be celebrated on 1 October 2021.

Regarding the judicial work of the Tribunal, the President reported on the delivery of the Judgment on Preliminary Objections of the Special Chamber of the Tribunal in the *Dispute concerning delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean* on 28 January 2021. He informed the Meeting that the Special Chamber rejected the preliminary objections raised by the Maldives challenging both the jurisdiction of the Chamber and the admissibility of the claims submitted by Mauritius. Further to this Judgment, the procedure on the merits of the case has been resumed. The President noted that the Tribunal has received the Memorial of Mauritius and that the Counter-Memorial of the Maldives is due in November this year.

The President also reported on another case on the Tribunal's docket, the *M/T "San Padre Pio" Case (Switzerland/Nigeria)*, concerning the arrest and detention of the *M/T "San Padre Pio"*, its crew and cargo, stating that the hearing in the case is due to open on 9 September 2021.

Turning to organizational matters, the President noted that the Tribunal successfully held two administrative sessions in hybrid format in September 2020 and March 2021. He added that during these sessions the Tribunal amended its Rules in two respects, firstly with a view to rendering them gender inclusive, and secondly so that hearings, meetings and readings of judgments could be held entirely or in part by

video link, if needed, for public health, security or other compelling reasons. Operating within this framework, the Tribunal has managed to ensure the continuity of its mandate while protecting the health of its judges and staff as well as of representatives of the parties appearing before it. In this context, the President highlighted the importance of modern technology to the efficient functioning of international courts and tribunals. He informed the Meeting that the audio-visual equipment in the courtroom and deliberations room would soon undergo a full upgrade and that an interim courtroom had been installed that will remain available until the technical work has been completed in 2022 in order to ensure that the Tribunal can continue to exercise its judicial functions. He expressed his gratitude to the German government for modernizing the facilities.

The President went on to emphasize the Tribunal's commitment to its role in capacity building despite the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the period 2020-2021, fellows from seven countries were able to participate in the nine-month ITLOS-Nippon Foundation Capacity-Building and Training Programme, which was run in hybrid format. President Hoffmann noted with appreciation the continued support of the Nippon Foundation to the fellowship programme. He informed the delegates that the Tribunal's internship programme continues to run as normal and in person, albeit in a reduced form. He thanked the Korea Maritime Institute and the Government of China for their contributions to the Tribunal's Trust Fund for the Law of the Sea. The President also announced that the new capacity-building programme for legal advisers wishing to familiarize themselves with the dispute-settlement mechanisms established by the Convention, which is funded by the Republic of Korea, will commence at the end of this year, depending on the evolution of the pandemic.

President Hoffmann's statement concluded with the announcement of the Tribunal's twenty-fifth anniversary on 1 October 2021, which will be marked by a small commemorative event. In light of the preference for an in-person event to be held in the refurbished courtroom and the likelihood that measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 would still be in place in autumn 2021, the President informed the delegates that the Tribunal is exploring the possibility of hosting a symposium at its premises in autumn 2022. The President expressed his belief that the Tribunal's achievements over the 25 years "place it in good stead to carry on its mandate into the 21st century as a central forum for the peaceful settlement of law of the sea disputes."

The President's statement may be found on the website of the Tribunal at <https://www.itlos.org/en/main/press-media/statements-of-the-president/>.

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