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International Tribunal for
the Law of the SeaTribunal international du
droit de la mer

Press Release

20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA

The solemn ceremony to mark the 20th anniversary of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea took place on 7 October 2016 in the City Hall of Hamburg. Mr Joachim Gauck, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Olaf Scholz, First Mayor and President of the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, and Mr Vladimir Golitsyn, President of the Tribunal, participated in the ceremony, which was attended by more than 500 guests.

Mr Olaf Scholz, First Mayor of Hamburg, opened the ceremony, highlighting the Tribunal's role as an essential element in conflict resolution and in securing peace under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In his statement, Mr Joachim Gauck, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, praised the work of the Tribunal in the peaceful settlement of disputes. He declared: “[t]he oceans form the largest habitat on our planet, and the ‘Tribunal of the Seas’ is responsible for them all. This is why the international community attaches such outstanding significance to the ITLOS when it comes to the settlement of disputes concerning the sea. In the twenty years since its establishment, the Tribunal has earned people’s trust and esteem. We definitely have good cause to celebrate today.”

In his remarks, Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, noted that “[f]rom the delimitation of the continental shelf of coastal States beyond 200 nautical miles, to the determination of the responsibilities and obligations of States sponsoring persons and entities with respect to activities in the Area, the Tribunal has distinguished itself for the thoroughness of its reasoning, the comprehensiveness of its research, and the speed with which it issues its judgments.”

Mr Vladimir Golitsyn, President of the Tribunal, gave an overview of the contribution of the Tribunal to the rule of law and stated that “[b]uilding on the experience of the last 20 years, the Tribunal stands ready to meet the challenges of the future. We, the Judges of the Tribunal, are ready to serve the international community and the States Parties to the Convention for the settlement of their disputes related to the implementation and application of the Convention.”

The statements and photographs from the ceremony are available on the Tribunal's website.

The solemn ceremony marked the final event of the week's anniversary celebrations, following on from a two-day international symposium on "The contribution of the Tribunal to the Rule of Law" and a visit by the Secretary-General to the Tribunal.

Over 150 participants, among them Judges of the Tribunal, judges of the International Court of Justice as well as of other judicial institutions, academics, lawyers and counsel who have appeared before international courts and tribunals, took part in the symposium. A webcast of the symposium is available in the 20th anniversary section of the Tribunal's website.

Mr Ban Ki-moon, accompanied by his wife, Mrs Ban Soon-taek, paid a visit to the Tribunal during the morning of 7 October 2016. The Secretary-General was welcomed by Mr Vladimir Golitsyn, President of the Tribunal and Mr Philippe Gautier, Registrar. After a courtesy call on the President of the Tribunal, Mr Ban signed the visitors' book and had a meeting with the Members of the Tribunal in the Tribunal courtroom. He also met the staff members of the Registry.

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 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