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International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

Tribunal international du droit de la mer



Press Release

THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA HOLDS A COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONY TO CELEBRATE ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea held a commemorative ceremony today to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Tribunal on 18 October 1996. President Tomas Heidar opened the ceremony, welcoming 150 distinguished guests on this occasion. The President's statement was followed by a video address by Mr António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, statements by Dr Johannes Dimroth, Deputy State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, and Dr Julia Monar, Director-General for Legal Affairs and Legal Adviser to the Federal Foreign Office, and a video address by Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large of the Republic of Singapore, President of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.



In opening the ceremony, President Heidar noted the fundamental role played by international courts and tribunals in today's world in upholding the international

legal system, emphasizing that supporting the work of international courts and tribunals means supporting the rule of international law itself. After his overview of 30 years of the Tribunal's jurisprudence and contribution to the law of the sea, the President observed that the Tribunal has established itself as a versatile and, indeed, the preferred forum for the settlement of law of the sea disputes under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. He closed his statement by reiterating the words of the first President of the Tribunal, Judge Tomas Mensah, that the Tribunal will serve humanity in the quest for peace through justice. President Heidar concluded with the assurance that the Tribunal is today able to renew this promise – “emboldened by the experience of the past, the lessons of our jurisprudence, the strength of our institution and, above all, our resolute commitment to the rule of law.”

After his congratulatory remarks, Mr António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, called on the international community to “protect the seas we share – for peace, for the planet, and for generations to come”.

Dr Johannes Dimroth, in his statement, reaffirmed Germany's commitment to its role as host country and its full recognition of “the Tribunal's immense importance for the peaceful settlement of disputes and for the international community as a whole”. He also stressed that “ultimately, the international courts protect nothing less than the guarantee that all States – regardless of their size and power – can rely on, and are subject to, the same rules. And that is why, in turn, the international courts deserve our protection as governments.”

Dr Julia Monar acknowledged that “[t]hrough its jurisprudence, the Tribunal has helped make UNCLOS what it was meant to be: the constitution of our ocean, and a living instrument” She further stated that “[a]s a country deeply committed to a rules-based order, Germany is very proud to host the Tribunal” and took the opportunity, on behalf of the Federal Foreign Office, to “congratulate the Tribunal, its President, all current and former judges and staff on thirty years of invaluable work.”

Touching on the Tribunal's growing caseload in the closing statement of the ceremony, Ambassador Koh reflected on the Tribunal's importance not only in the resolution of law of the sea disputes but also in its “vital role in the interpretation and clarification of UNCLOS rights and obligations”.

The ceremony was followed by a reception organized with the kind support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Consulate General of Japan.

The statements, photographs and a webcast of the ceremony will be made available in the 30th anniversary section of the Tribunal's website, together with the updated Digest of Jurisprudence, covering the Tribunal's jurisprudence from 1996 to 2026.

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

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