



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

Press Release

PROCEEDINGS INSTITUTED IN A DISPUTE BETWEEN PANAMA AND GUINEA-BISSAU REGARDING THE OIL TANKER *VIRGINIA G*

On 4 July 2011, proceedings were instituted in a dispute between Panama and Guinea-Bissau regarding the vessel *Virginia G*, flying the flag of Panama.

By letter dated 4 July 2011, the Agent of Panama notified to the Tribunal a special agreement concluded by an exchange of notes, dated 29 June and 4 July 2011, between the Republic of Panama and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau to submit to the Tribunal a dispute regarding a damage claim for the arrest of the vessel *Virginia G*. Attached to the same letter of 4 July 2011 were a note of 29 June 2011 issued by the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations, and a note of 4 July 2011 issued by the Agent of Panama.

The dispute between the two countries was initially submitted to arbitration pursuant to Annex VII of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, by means of a letter dated 3 June 2011 from Panama to Guinea-Bissau. In that letter, Panama suggested that the two Governments agree to transfer the dispute concerning the *Virginia G* to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea through an exchange of letters.

In its note of 29 June 2011, Guinea-Bissau expressed its agreement with Panama's proposal to transfer the case to the Tribunal, "whose jurisdiction in this case Guinea-Bissau accepts fully", adding that the "afore-mentioned proposal and this letter constitute a special agreement between the two Parties for the submission of the case to ITLOS".

In his note of 4 July 2011, the Agent of Panama stated that the proposal of Panama to submit the matter to the Tribunal and Guinea-Bissau's acceptance thereof are "sufficient to consider that the two governments have come to a Special Agreement to submit the case to ITLOS in accordance with article 55 of the Rules of ITLOS".

Accordingly, by a letter dated 4 July 2011, the Agent of Panama notified the special agreement to the Tribunal and instituted proceedings before the Tribunal, pursuant to article 55 of the Rules of the Tribunal.

The case has been entered in the List of cases of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea as Case No. 19.

According to the statement of claim submitted by Panama, the oil tanker *Virginia G* was carrying out refuelling operations for fishing vessels in the exclusive economic zone of Guinea-Bissau when it was arrested on 21 August 2009 by Guinean authorities. In that statement, Panama maintains that while the tanker was released on 22 October 2010 without the imposition of any penalty, it suffered serious damages during 14 months of detention. Panama therefore claims reparation for the damages suffered by the *Virginia G*.

Note: The press releases of the Tribunal do not constitute official documents.
They 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 or Ms Johanna van Kisfeld at: Am Internationalen Seegerichtshof 1, 22609 Hamburg, Germany,
Tel.: +49 (40) 35607-227; Fax: +49 (40) 35607-245;
E-mail: press@itlos.org