



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

# **Press Release**

(Issued by the Registrar)

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING OF THE TRIBUNAL**

**UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL PRAISES TRIBUNAL  
AS "MODERN COURT THAT CAN RESPOND QUICKLY"**

HAMBURG. The ceremony for the official handing-over of the new Headquarters Building of the Tribunal in Nienstedten, Hamburg, was held on Monday, 3 July 2000. It was the joint ceremony of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, held in the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan. The building was designed and constructed for the Tribunal by the Host Country, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Host City, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.



Handing-over of the key of the Headquarters Building

Photo: Stephan Wallocha

The event commenced with the arrival of the Secretary-General and Mrs. Nane Annan. They were welcomed by the President of the Tribunal, Mr. P. Chandrasekhara Rao, the Federal Minister of Justice of Germany, Mrs. Herta Däubler-Gmelin, the First Mayor of Hamburg, Mr. Ortwin Runde, the Senator of Justice of Hamburg, Mrs. Lore Peschel-Gutzeit and the Registrar of the Tribunal, Mr. Gritakumar Chitty. A brass band played as they arrived.

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**Handing-over of the key of the Headquarters Building**

Mr. Eberhard Pohlandt, Director of the Federal Building Authorities, responsible for the construction of the new premises, presented a key of the building to the President of the Tribunal, Mr. P. Chandrasekhara Rao. Mr. Pohlandt expressed the pride of the craftsmen, architects, engineers, consultants and authorities involved in constructing the building. The President of the Tribunal handed over the key to the Registrar of the Tribunal, Mr. Gritakumar E. Chitty, as the custodian of the building.

**School children sing "Nienstedter-Gören" song**

In the entrance area the 188 flags of the member States of the United Nations were displayed for the occasion. A group of 30 schoolchildren aged seven to eight from the "Schulkamp" school of Nienstedten sang the "Nienstedter-Gören" song, a traditional children's song about growing up in the new neighbourhood of the Tribunal – Nienstedten.

**Model of the "Wappen von Hamburg I"**

Mr. Ortwin Runde, First Mayor of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, presented a gift to the Tribunal of a model of the seventeenth-century convoy ship, the "Wappen von Hamburg I" (Hamburg Coat of Arms), on behalf of the Senate of Hamburg.

**Viewing of the building**

The President of the Tribunal, the Secretary-General and other high dignitaries were guided in viewing the new building by Baroness Emanuela von Branca of the firm of architects that designed the building.

The Secretary-General also paid a short visit to the nineteenth century Villa Schröder, which is part of the premises of the new Headquarters Building of the Tribunal.

**Ceremony in the Main Courtroom**

The opening ceremony took place in the Main Courtroom of the Headquarters Building.

Seated on the bench were the President, Vice-President and Judges of the Tribunal, as also the Secretary-General, the Minister of Justice of the Federal Republic of Germany, the First Mayor and the President of the tenth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Ambassador Peter Donigi, and the Registrar of the Tribunal. The proceedings were attended by national and international dignitaries. They included Government Ministers and other Government representatives, the Legal Counsel to the United Nations, Ambassadors and Legal Advisors, Heads and

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representatives of United Nations offices and of international and regional courts and other bodies, experts in the field of law of the sea, members of the consular corps and other prominent persons in the Host Country.

After the Registrar of the Tribunal had announced the opening of the proceedings, the President of the Tribunal addressed the august gathering. He stressed that the "Tribunal is happy that its seat is in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, which is a well-known port city, reputed for its long tradition in international shipping and maritime trade".

The President, on behalf of the Tribunal, expressed his gratitude to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and the people of Germany for dedicating the building in the service of the cause of settlement of law of the sea disputes by peaceful means.

The President underlined the Tribunal's aim to maintain the efficient and expeditious work methods so far employed during cases before the Tribunal, with a view to promoting "dispute settlement without unnecessary delay or expense" and stated that the "Tribunal has made every effort to be user-friendly".

While referring to the relationship between the different bodies competent to adjudicate under the United Nations Convention, the President emphasised that there was no "hierarchical relationship" between these bodies and that they were "intended to complement each other in the global system for the peaceful settlement of disputes" and appealed to the adjudicatory bodies to "show mutual respect to each other's decisions".

The meeting was then addressed by the Federal Minister of Justice of Germany who conveyed to the Tribunal the best wishes and greetings of the Federal Government of Germany and expressed her confidence that the Tribunal would successfully continue to intensify its activities in the settlement of disputes and in the development of the law of the sea.

The First Mayor of Hamburg thanked all those involved in the construction of the new Headquarters Building. He declared that Hamburg, with its maritime history, was predestined to be chosen as the right place for the establishment of the Tribunal.

The Secretary-General stressed that for the Hanse in the fourteenth century, "as for all of us in today's global economy, the law of the sea was no luxury, but essential to their survival".

Mr. Annan described the Tribunal as being the "keystone of the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention" and, together with the International Court of Justice, "central to the regime of international peace and security that has evolved since the United Nations Charter was adopted." He also said he was "delighted to note that in its first four

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years the Tribunal has already built a reputation among international lawyers as a modern court that can respond quickly".

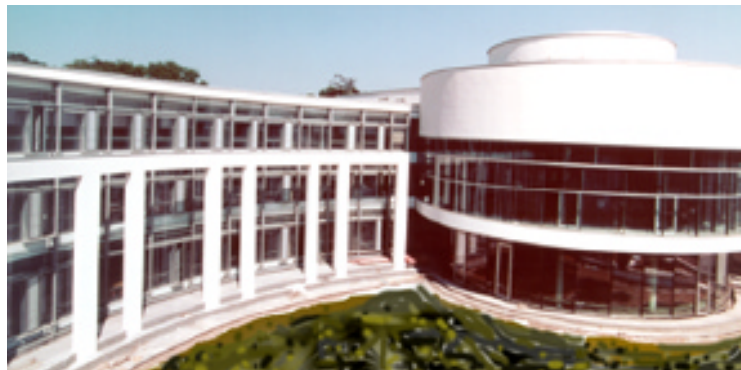
The Secretary-General declared that it was "very encouraging that this Tribunal had more cases submitted to it in its first three years than any previous international court" and expressed his hope that "more and more parties will be encouraged to make use of the Tribunal in settling their disputes".

The Secretary-General described the building as "besides being meticulously crafted to serve the specialized needs of this institution ... a work of art in its own right." He complimented the architects with having achieved "a remarkable harmony between the ancient trees so carefully preserved, the renovated villa in all its glory, and the glass, metal and stone of the modern structure they have added."

Ms. Maya Katharina Koch, on violin, and Ms. Sara Janina Koch, on piano, played Sonata for Piano and Violin, op.30, No. 3 in G major *Allegro vivace* by Ludwig von Beethoven at the opening of the ceremony and *Danse Espagnole* by Manuel de Falla at its closure.

### **The buildings**

With its entry into its new premises, the Tribunal will have at its disposal a modern court building with up-to-date technology to promote the most efficient and expeditious administration of justice. It consists of courtrooms, deliberation rooms, Judges' offices and offices of the Registry.



The Headquarters Building

Photo: Oliver Heisner

The historic Villa Schröder, built by the Hamburg banker Frensdorf at the beginning of the eighteen seventies, is one of a chain of prestigious English-style country estates along the Elbchaussee. The Villa is integrated into the architectural concept of the new premises.

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**Available on the website of the United Nations Division  
for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea:**

Statements delivered at the ceremony of the Official Opening of the Headquarters Building (Press Release ITLOS/Press 36/Add.1)

Pictures of the Headquarters Building are available at  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/los/ITLOS/Hdqrts/Hdqrpix.htm>

Pictures of the President, Vice-President, Judges and Registrar are available at  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/los/ITLOS/Judg2000/Judg2000.htm>

The Press Releases of the Tribunal, documents and other information are available on the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/los/> and from the Registry of the Tribunal. Please contact Mr. Robert van Dijk at Wexstrasse 4, 20355 Hamburg, Germany, Tel.: (49) (40) 35607-227/228, Fax: (49) (40) 35607-245/275; or United Nations DC-1, suite 1140, New York, NY 10017, Tel.: (1) (212) 963-6480, Fax: (1) (212) 963-0908, E-mail: [press@itlos.hamburg.de](mailto:press@itlos.hamburg.de)

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