



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

Press Release

(Issued by the Registry)

HEARINGS IN THE M/V "SAIGA" CASE TRIBUNAL ISSUES ORDER

HAMBURG, 21 November. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, today commenced its hearing in the M/V "Saiga" case. Within eight days of the filing of the application the Judges of the Tribunal assembled in the Great Hall of the Hamburg City Hall to start the hearings in the application filed by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines against Guinea.

The application of 13 November 1997 requests the prompt release of the vessel M/V "Saiga" alleged to have been arrested on 28 October 1997 together with its crew by the authorities of Guinea off the coast of West Africa and taken to the port of Conakry.



Hearings on the opening day

At the first day of the hearings, at which the agents and counsel of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were present, the Tribunal responded to a request by the Government of Guinea to postpone the hearings in order for it to prepare the case. The Tribunal, after having ascertained the views of the parties, issued an order postponing the continuation of the hearings for six days until 27 November 1997. In view of the urgency attached to these proceedings and the humanitarian considerations for the crew a limited postponement was granted. The hearings are

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expected to continue all day on Thursday and Friday, 27 and 28 November with each party being entitled to one day to present its evidence and arguments.

The judgement in the M/V “Saiga” case will be delivered within ten days of the end of the hearings. The judgement will be read at a public sitting of the Tribunal.

The Members of the Tribunal are President Thomas A. Mensah (Ghana), Vice-President Rüdiger Wolfrum (Germany), Judges Lihai Zhao (China), Hugo Caminos (Argentina), Vicente Marotta Rangel (Brazil), Alexander Yankov (Bulgaria), Soji Yamamoto (Japan), Anatoly Lazarevich Kolodkin (Russian Federation), Choon-Ho Park (Republic of Korea), Paul Bamela Engo (Cameroon), L. Dolliver M. Nelson (Grenada), P. Chandrasekhara Rao (India), Joseph Akl (Lebanon), David Anderson (United Kingdom), Budislav Vukas (Croatia), Joseph Sinde Warioba (United Republic of Tanzania), Edward Arthur Laing (Belize), Tullio Treves (Italy), Mohamed Mouldi Marsit (Tunisia), Gudmundur Eiriksson (Iceland), Tafsir Malick Ndiaye (Senegal).

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is an independent international judicial institution which has been established pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This Convention is one of the most comprehensive international treaties ever completed. It provides for the outer limits to which coastal States can claim jurisdiction in their adjacent waters and regulates prominent issues such as fisheries and navigation. A whole chapter of the Convention is devoted to the prevention of pollution of the marine environment. The Convention also pronounces the resources of the deep seabed as the common heritage of mankind and sets up the International Seabed Authority to regulate the exploitation of the deep seabed.

At present, 122 States are party to the Convention, indicating the world wide approval which the Convention has obtained.

The Convention gives the Tribunal jurisdiction to deal with a variety of international disputes. Disputes amongst States that can be referred to the Tribunal may involve *inter alia* fisheries, navigation, ocean pollution and the delimitation of maritime zones. The Tribunal also has compulsory jurisdiction over the prompt release of arrested vessels and their crews in certain circumstances and under certain conditions. In addition, the Tribunal’s Seabed Disputes Chamber has its own specialized jurisdiction to deal with disputes arising out of the exploration and exploitation of the resources of the seabed and ocean floor beyond national jurisdiction as set out by the Convention.

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Mr. Gritakumar E. Chitty (Sri Lanka) is the Registrar of the Tribunal. Mr. Philippe H. Gautier (Belgium) is the Deputy Registrar.

The Rules of the Tribunal, the Resolution on the Internal Judicial Practice of the Tribunal, and the Guidelines concerning the Preparation and Presentation of Cases before the Tribunal

are available on the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/los/>

Previous Press Releases, setting out the background and the composition of the Tribunal and its specialized chambers, are available from the Registrar of the Tribunal.

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Photo courtesy of Andreas Costanzo

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