

**Twenty-second Meeting of States Parties  
to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,**  
*(Conference Room 1, NLB  
Monday, 4 June 2012, 10:00 a.m.)*

**Opening remarks by Ms. Patricia O'Brien,  
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs,  
The Legal Counsel**

Madame President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Madame President, on your election as President of the twenty-second Meeting of States Parties. Allow me, on behalf of the Secretary-General, to convey to you and to participating delegations his best wishes for fruitful and productive deliberations.

I am honoured to join you on the occasion of the opening of the twenty-second Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Today, the Convention has 162 parties, including the European Union. The Convention was opened for signature at Montego Bay, Jamaica, on

10 December 1982 and came into force on 16 November 1994, one year after Guyana became the 60th State to ratify it.

The Convention, together with two Implementing Agreements: the 1994 Part XI Agreement and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, provides a comprehensive legal regime for all activities in the ocean. With 320 articles and 9 Annexes covering every aspect of the oceans and marine environment, UNCLOS is often referred to as the "Constitution for the oceans".

The year 2012 is a special year for the Convention as it is the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Throughout this anniversary year, several events have been scheduled for the celebration of this important anniversary, a major milestone in international law.

To start with, during the twenty-second Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS, we will celebrate the fourth "World Oceans Day" this Friday, 8 June. This year's World Oceans Day is dedicated to the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary. We are fortunate to have esteemed panellists speak on the theme "UNCLOS at 30" during a round-table discussion on that day.

From 12 May to 12 August this year, the Republic of Korea is organizing the Yeosu World Expo with the main theme "The Living Ocean and Coast: Diversity of Resources and Sustainable Activities". On 11 and 12 August, the Korean Maritime Institute, the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and Trade of Republic of Korea and my Office will be co-hosting an international conference commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention. At this international conference, the participants are scheduled to discuss the achievements and challenges faced by the Convention as well as the involvement of Asia in this milestone international legal instrument.

Also at the Yeosu World Expo, a video on “UNCLOS at 30”, prepared by my Office with a prologue by the Secretary-General is being played in the UN pavilion.

Distinguished delegates,

This Meeting will provide States Parties with the opportunity to be updated on the work of the three institutions established by the Convention: the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International Seabed Authority and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. I would like to join you, Madame President, in welcoming the President of the Tribunal, H.E. Mr. Shunji Yanai, the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, H.E. Mr. Nii Odunton, and the Chairperson of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, Mr. Galo Carrera Hurtado.

The Tribunal has continued to contribute to the development of the Law of the Sea. In March, the Tribunal rendered its judgment in the “Dispute concerning delimitation of the maritime boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal

(Bangladesh/Myanmar)". The judgement was the first by the Tribunal concerning maritime boundary delimitation.

Moreover, the Seabed Disputes Chamber rendered its first ever Advisory Opinion on "the Responsibilities and obligations of States sponsoring persons and entities with respect to activities in the area". The Advisory Opinion had been requested by the Council of the International Seabed Authority.

I am also pleased to note that during the past year the Secretariat, through the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of my Office, continued to maintain its close relationship with the International Seabed Authority and to monitor the latter's important work.

We are all aware of the valuable contribution of the Authority towards the exploration of seabed resources. In the past years, the Authority adopted the Regulations for Prospecting and Exploration of Polymetallic Nodules, and the Regulations for Prospecting and Exploration of Polymetallic Sulphides. Work on the third set of regulations, namely the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Cobalt-Rich Ferromanganese Crusts, will be resumed by the Council of the Authority in July of this year. These important instruments will provide guidance to contractors in their exploration activities.

Distinguished delegates,

Let me recall that, since the last Meeting of States Parties, the Commission held its twenty-eight and twenty-ninth sessions. The Commission continued its consideration of submissions and adopted four sets of recommendations at the last session. This demonstrates that the Commission is doing its best to address the existing workload.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the Commission for their excellent work and professionalism. Soon, this Meeting will elect 21 members of the Commission, who are experts in the field of geology, geophysics or hydrography. Needless to say, the contribution of all members of the Commission is important and critical for the successful work of this body. With the ever increasing number of submissions, the work of the Commission could not be successful without the input of all of its members.

Distinguished delegates,

I trust that States Parties will continue to advance the goals of the Convention. Let us recall that these goals include peaceful uses of the oceans, equitable and efficient utilization of their resources, conservation of their living resources, as well as the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment.

On this note, I would like to convey to you my best wishes for your fruitful deliberations and a successful outcome.

Thank you very much.

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