



**UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**Fortieth session of the  
Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf**

**Statement**

**by**

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United Nations Legal Counsel**

**Conference Room 6**

**Monday, 8 February 2016 at 10:45 A.M.**

Chairman,  
Distinguished Members of the Commission,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am pleased to welcome you to United Nations Headquarters on the occasion of the opening of the plenary part of the fortieth session of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

Entering into its fortieth plenary session, the Commission continues to make a vital contribution towards the advancement of the goals of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

However, the Commission continues also to face many challenges.

These challenges are significant, as the workload of the Commission continues to increase. The total number of Submissions, including revised Submissions, is now 81, after the receipt of the partial revised Submission made by the Russian Federation in respect of the Arctic Ocean on the very day of the opening of the plenary of the thirty-eighth session.

In this regard, it is commendable that the Commission has demonstrated again its commitment to the efficient discharge of its mandate by deciding, at the last

plenary session in the summer of 2015, to maintain the current pattern of 21 weeks of meetings per year, for the remainder of its term of office.

I am also aware that you continue to discharge your functions under conditions of service which are not optimal. On numerous occasions, the Commission raised the issue of its working conditions and concluded that its members needed appropriate medical coverage as well as more adequate working space and facilities. I note that the General Assembly has taken into account both your commitment and your needs in its last annual resolution on oceans and the law of the sea. In its resolution 70/235, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide cost-effective, transportable, non-structural improvements to address some of the immediate working space needs of the Commission. These improvements are to be covered within existing resources. My Office has yet to hear from the appropriate units of the Secretariat concerning the changes that may be effected to comply with this request but is closely monitoring all the relevant developments. The Director of the Division will keep you abreast of the situation.

My Office will also continue to follow-up with the Department of Management on the issue of medical insurance for the members of the Commission and provide support to States Parties in their deliberations on this matter.

Let me briefly address yet another factor that affects the work of the Commission, namely the fact that the Commission continues to have one vacancy due to the lack of nominations from among the Group of Eastern European States.

As you are aware, following the resignation Mr. Nenad Leder of Croatia, who never assumed his functions, the Secretary-General made a call for nominations with the expectation that a new member would be elected at the resumed twenty-fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on 15 January 2016.

Regrettably, at the end of the nomination period, on 31 December 2015, no nominations were received. Neither any late nomination was received in advance of the resumed Meeting. As a consequence, the Meeting of States Parties could not conduct the scheduled by-election and decided that a new by-election would be included in the agenda for the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties, which will be held at United Nations Headquarters from 20 to 24 June.

Thus, the Commission will still be missing a member for at least one more session. Let me assure you, my Office is working closely with States Parties to the Convention in order to bring to their attention the importance of providing the

Commission with all the resources necessary for it to discharge its essential functions, including by filling the current vacancy.

Distinguished Members of the Commission,

I would like to take this opportunity to convey to you my best wishes for your continued success, as you have arrived at a critical point for the completion of the hard work carried out during the past four years, through the adoption of the numerous recommendations which are, or are about to be, before the plenary of the Commission, ensuring the quality that has distinguished the work of the Commission.

Together with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, I look forward to working with you through the remainder of your term and wish you a successful fortieth session.

Thank you.