



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

Special Commemorative Session of the
Assembly of the International Seabed Authority,
Convened to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force
of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the
establishment of the International Seabed Authority

Remarks

by

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Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and
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Kingston, Jamaica

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to join you today to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and of the establishment of the International Seabed Authority under the Convention.

At the outset, I wish to thank Jamaica, the host country of the Authority, for its hospitality and the Honourable Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, for her warm welcome.



Over the past 25 years, the Convention has achieved nearly universal acceptance.

From 'A Constitution for the Oceans', as remarked by Tommy T.B. Koh, of Singapore, President of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, the Convention has become the constitution for our oceans.

Setting out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and having many provisions that are now recognized as reflecting customary international law, the Convention over the years played a critical role in maintaining international peace and security and promoting the sustainable development of oceans, seas and their resources.

One of the main contributions of the Convention to the rule of law is the establishment of three bodies that assist States Parties in effecting their rights and duties under the Convention. These three bodies ~~are~~ the International Seabed Authority, as well as the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, are deeply respected among a large number of intergovernmental bodies which are called upon to contribute to making oceans the space for peaceful cooperation among all States and a source of prosperity for all peoples of the world.

Matching a very complex substantive regime with such an articulate and innovative institutional mechanism as the International Seabed Authority is yet another reason why the Convention represents such a unique achievement in the history of multilateral negotiations.

In particular, the mandate that the drafters of the Convention envisaged for the Authority had no precedents. The principle of "common heritage of mankind"





of women in this regard, and the transfer of technology and scientific knowledge relating to activities in the Area

Distinguished delegates,

The entry into force of the Convention was a defining moment in the progressive development and codification of the law of the sea. The commemoration of this event offers a valuable opportunity to reflect on the ~~important~~ relevance of the Convention and the crucial importance of multilateralism without which our achievements in the past would not have been possible.





provisions of the Convention of common interest as well as on issues relating to the ongoing development of the law of the sea.

In my capacity as UNOceans Focal Point, I note with satisfaction the ongoing support for and active participation of the Authority in the work of UNOceans, with a view to reinforcing interagency coordination and cooperation and identifying synergies and further areas of collaboration.

I once again offer my congratulations to the Authority on its twenty-fifth anniversary and wish it every success in its important work to put the principle of “common heritage of mankind” into practice for the benefit of mankind as a whole.

