

Statement by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of Sea, Office of
Legal Affairs to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly
on the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship
21 October 2021

Madame Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs to provide you with an update on the implementation of the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea (In short, the HSA Fellowship).

Capacity-building activities are one of the core mandates of the Secretary-General under relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. On numerous occasions, most recently in its resolution 75/239 of 31 December 2020, the Assembly recognized, and expressed its appreciation for the important contribution to the capacity-building of developing countries and the promotion of the law of the sea made by the HSA Memorial Fellowship.

The Fellowship was established in 1981 to assist government officials and other professionals from developing States to acquire additional knowledge on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (or UNCLOS), in order to promote its wider application, and to enhance specialized experience in maritime affairs and related disciplines.

As of October 2021, 33 fellows from 30 developing countries have completed the HSA Fellowship. Of these, 15 are women and 18 are men. These professionals are now making important contributions in their respective countries and regions. Indeed, our office has seen many of them back in New

York taking active roles on behalf of their States or other national and regional organisations in important fora and processes related to ocean affairs and the law of the sea. Most recently, one the 1994 fellows, Mr. Maurice Kengne Kamga of Cameroon, was elected judge as a member of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in August of last year.

Distinguished delegates,

Ms. Linda Bana of Ghana was awarded the 2020 fellowship. However, considering international travel restrictions due to the Coronavirus-19 pandemic and related situation in New York, the 2020 HSA Fellowship was tentatively postponed to 2021. Given the continued travel restrictions during the fall of this year, Ms. Bana was given the choice to undertake a virtual fellowship in 2021 or defer the fellowship until 2022, in the hopes that it can be undertaken in-person.

It is now more than ever important for developing countries, to build and maintain the capacity to actively participate in ocean-related processes, which are many. From better understanding and effective implementation of international law of the sea, as reflected in UNCLOS, its two implementing Agreements and other related international instruments, to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 14; from the implementation of the commitments under the Paris Agreement, which noted the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, to the effective participation in the ongoing BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference negotiations, the needs are indeed many and the challenges plentiful.

It is, therefore, critical that awards under this Fellowship are implemented continuously and consistently, including so that States can plan accordingly for the application and eventual release of Staff. This implies that the necessary funding is made available to this end. I note in this regard that, due to insufficient funds, no awards were made from 2007 to 2009, in 2014

and in 2016. In addition, owing to insufficient funds in 2017, only a partial award was made.

Distinguished delegates,

Let me recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 75/239 on oceans and the law of the sea, once again urged States, and other relevant stakeholders to make voluntary financial contributions in support of the Fellowship, so that a regular award may be granted every year.

We thank States who have made the current and previous 33 fellowships possible, and strongly encourage voluntary contributions in support of future fellows. The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs remains available to address any question in this regard.

Thank you.