

Statement to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly
on the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship
20 October 2022

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with pleasure that the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea provides you with an update on the implementation of the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe (HSA) Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea.

As one of the core mandates of the Secretary-General under relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, capacity-building activities are of vital importance. On numerous occasions, most recently in its resolution 76/72 of 9 December 2021, the Assembly recognized, and expressed its appreciation for, the important contribution made by the HSA Memorial Fellowship to the capacity-building of developing countries and the promotion of the law of the sea.

Indeed, this Fellowship which was established in 1981, aims to assist government officials and other professionals from developing States to acquire in-depth knowledge on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, in order to promote its wider application, and to develop specialized experience in maritime affairs and related disciplines.

As of October 2022, 33 fellows from 30 developing countries have undertaken the HSA Memorial Fellowship, of these, 15 are women and 18 are men. These professionals are now making important contributions in their respective countries and regions. We have seen many of them return to 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.

In 2020, Ms. Linda Bana of Ghana was awarded Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea. However, due to

COVID-19 restrictions including inability to hold most in-person activities, Ms. Bana expressed a preference to defer the fellowship, rather than undertake the fellowship virtually. Thus, the Fellowship was postponed to 2023. In the interim, Ms. Bana has been provided with an opportunity to access a virtual training series offered by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

It is now more important than ever for developing countries to build and maintain the capacity to actively participate in ocean-related processes. Capacity development in ocean affairs and the law of the sea has many facets: from better understanding and effective implementation of international law of the sea, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, its two implementing Agreements and other related international instruments, to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 14; and 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 IGC negotiations. The needs are many and the challenges are plentiful.

Thus, it is critical that awards under this Fellowship are implemented continuously and consistently. This implies that the necessary funding is made available. 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.

Let me recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 76/72 on oceans and the law of the sea, once again urged States, and other relevant stakeholders, in support of the Fellowship, to make voluntary financial contributions, which are urgently needed so that a regular award may be granted every year.

In this respect, 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 remains available to address any question in this regard.

Thank you.