

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

20 October 2023

[Check against delivery]

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea to provide you with an update on the implementation of the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea.

In its resolution 72/73 of 5 December 2017, 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.

As you may recall, 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, in order to promote its wider application, and to enhance specialized experience in maritime affairs and related disciplines.

As of October 2023, 34 fellows from 30 developing countries have undertaken the HSA Memorial Fellowship. Of these, 16 are women and 18 are men. 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. These professionals are thus making important contributions in their respective countries and regions.

Señor presidente,

Distinguidos delegados

Este año, la Señora Linda Bana de Ghana, a quien se le otorgó la Beca Conmemorativa Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe sobre el Derecho del Mar en 2020 (dos mil veinte), finalmente pudo realizar la beca en persona. Después de concluir una práctica de tres meses en la División a principios de este año, la Sra. Bana actualmente está completando la parte académica de la beca que está programada para completar en diciembre.

La Sra. Bana no pudo realizar su beca en 2020 debido a las restricciones de COVID-19 (COVID-diez y nueve), incluida la imposibilidad de realizar la mayoría de las actividades en persona, y en los años siguientes, la Señora Bana expresó su preferencia por posponer la beca, en lugar de realizarla virtualmente.

Mientras tanto, la Sra. Bana tuvo la oportunidad de acceder a una serie de capacitación virtual ofrecida por la División.

Monsieur le Président,

Mesdames, Messieurs,

Les activités de renforcement des capacités sont l'un des principaux mandats du Secrétaire général en vertu des résolutions pertinentes de l'Assemblée générale, y compris donc du Bureau des Affaires juridiques à travers entre autres, sa Division des affaires maritimes et du droit de la mer. A cet égard, nous notons aussi que les autres activités de renforcement de capacités entreprises par la Division ont également pu reprendre en personne.

En particulier, les ateliers régionaux de formation sous les Programmes d'Assistance destinés à répondre aux besoins stratégiques des pays en voie de développement en matière de la gouvernance des océans et du droit de la mer. Ainsi dès janvier 2023, s'est tenu au Chili un atelier de renforcement des capacités portant sur la délimitation des limites extérieures du plateau continental au-delà de 200 milles marins ; un autre atelier consacré à la gouvernance des océans et à l'interface science-politique dans l'Océan indien a été organisé en août cette même année aux Seychelles ; et, encore tout récemment, du 10 au 13 octobre 2023, a eu lieu au Cameroun un atelier portant sur le droit de la mer et la gouvernance des océans dans le Golfe de Guinée. Par ailleurs, une formation sur le droit de la mer la gouvernance des océans et l'interface science-politique se tiendra en Indonésie en décembre prochain.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now more important than ever for developing countries to build and maintain the capacity to actively participate in ocean-related processes and effectively implement international law of the sea, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, its three implementing Agreements and other related international instruments. Capacity-building is also crucial for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 14; and the commitments under the Paris Agreement, which noted the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems.

Thus, it is critical that awards under the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Fellowship are implemented continuously and consistently. This implies that the necessary funding is made available. In this regard, as at 31 July, the Certified net assets of the Trust Fund, minus programme support costs, were approximately US\$ 120,000. Estimated costs of one fellowship can be as high as US\$ 75,000 depending on the location of the academic portion of the fellowship. I would note that, due to insufficient funds, no awards were made from 2007 to 2009, and in 2014 and in 2016. In addition, owing to insufficient funds in 2017, only a partial award was made.

For your information, the call for applications for the next cycle of applications for the 2024 Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Fellowship has been issued and the deadline for applying is 12 November 2023.

Let me recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 77/248 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.

We take this opportunity to thank all States who have made the current and previous 34 fellowships possible, and strongly encourage continued voluntary contributions in support of future fellows. The Division remains available to address any question in this regard.

In conclusion, for ease of reference, a brochure on the capacity-building portfolio of the Division has been published not only on the website of the Division, but is also available in hard copies in English, French and Spanish.

Thank you for your kind attention.