Prefatory Note

These proceedings mark the Twenty-Seventh Annual Conference sponsored by the Center for Oceans Law and Policy, University of Virginia School of Law. The co-host for 2003 was the relatively newly established Law of the Sea Institute of Iceland that was an ideal co-host for a meeting in Reykjavik from 25-27 June. The topic of the Legal and Scientific Aspects of Continental Shelf Limits remains not only of practical interest to Iceland but also of growing importance more generally to those concerned with the international law of the sea. Thus, the Reykjavik meeting was an auspicious event for both academic centers. Many of the world class experts who attended commented that this was probably the best substantive conference they had ever attended and opinion was unanimous that the meeting was successful in every respect.

A Conference highlight was the keynote address by Hans Corell, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General of Legal Affairs titled: “International Oceans Governance and the Challenge of Implementation.” The editors would be remiss in conveying the atmosphere of the meeting if mention was not made of Secretary Corell's virtuosity not only in his thoughtful speech but also in his leading the singing of Viking tunes at the Gala dinner. No one who spent that daylight evening on a small, historic island near Reykjavik will ever forget that dinner.

The Conference began with a warm welcome from Ambassador Sverrir Haukur Gunnlaugsson, Chairman of the Board of the Law of the Sea Institute of Iceland. Thereafter, Professor John Norton Moore set the stage for subsequent panels by providing a comprehensive review of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Tomas H. Heidar, Legal Adviser of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and Director of the Law of the Sea Institute of Iceland, then elaborated on key legal aspects of the continental shelf regime. He concentrated his attention on article 76 of the 1982 Convention that contains complex formulae for determining the outer limits of national jurisdiction over the continental margin. The overall scientific aspects of the continental shelf were then covered by Olav Eldholm, Professor of Marine Geophysics, Department of Geology, University of Oslo. This concluded the first panel under its Moderator, Myron H. Nordquist.
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The second panel, which dealt with the geomorphology and geology of the world's oceans, was chaired by Judge Rüdiger Wolfrum from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. A senior geophysicist from the National Energy Authority of Iceland, Steinar Thor Gudlaugsson, spoke first on the natural prolongation concept and its application to the continental margin. Dave Monahan, Director of Ocean Mapping, Canadian Hydrographic Service, then discussed the general rule of determining the foot of the continental slope as the point of maximum change in the gradient at its base. The third speaker on this panel was Dr. Richard T. Haworth, Assistant Deputy Minister, Minerals and Metals Sector, Natural Resources Canada. His topic was also determining the foot of the continental slope but by using the exception in the 1982 Convention that allows consideration of evidence that is contrary to the general rule.

Panel III, devoted to the "contentious and difficult" topic of ridges, was entrusted to the skilful moderation of Judge Dolliver Nelson, President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Two Members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, Philip A. Symonds (Australia) and Harald Brekke (Norway), spoke (as did everyone at the Conference) in their private and not official capacities. Although they had spoken separately at the Conference, the authors decided to co-author both written texts, one titled: A Scientific Overview of Ridges Related to Article 76 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the other titled: The Ridge Provisions of Article 76 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Finally, a retired professor from the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences at Stanford University, Arthur Grantz, examined the treatment of ridges and borderlands in the Arctic Ocean under article 76.

Annick de Marffy, Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea at the United Nations, chaired a fulsome Panel IV on "The Role of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and Submissions by Coastal States." The Chairman of the Commission, Peter F. Croker from Ireland, led off with a status report on the work of the Commission and its future challenges. Comments on emerging issues in the Commission were next made by Alexei A. Zinchenko who is Principal Officer and Secretary of the Commission. Gudmundur Eiriksson, a former Judge of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and now Icelandic Ambassador to, inter alia, Canada, explored what happens in the case of a disagreement between a coastal State and the Commission. Alex
G. Oude Elferink, a Senior Research Associate at the Netherlands Institute for the Law of the Sea, Utrecht University, spoke on "Submissions of Coastal States to the CLCS in Cases of Unresolved Land or Maritime Disputes." The final speaker was former Ambassador David A. Colson of the United States who presented a paper on delimitation of the outer continental shelf between States with opposite or adjacent coasts. An animated roundtable discussion with the audience followed to conclude the second day.

Friday morning began with a panel on current issues moderated by Dr. Robert W. Smith, Geographer, U.S. Department of State. The first speaker was Ron Macnab, a recent retiree from the Geological Survey of Canada. His focus was on the outer limits of the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean, especially in light of the Russian Federation's submission to the Commission. A spectacular PowerPoint presentation followed featuring the data required for the definition of the continental shelf limits under article 76. Dr. Larry Mayer at the Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping at the University of New Hampshire had been commissioned by the United States to survey its prospective continental margin claim. Robert van de Poll of the commercial firm CARIS then provided a comprehensive review of the practical steps to complete an article 76 desktop study using currently available data sources. After a coffee break, two presentations were made by speakers who chose not to include written text for these proceedings. Dr. Alexander Skaridov from St. Petersburg commented upon the Russian submission pending before the Continental Shelf Commission and Professor Frida Armas Pfirter of Buenos Aires detailed the organization and planning underway in the Argentine Continental Shelf Limits Project. At the same time, Kuen-chen Fu, Professor of Law, Xiamen University Center for Ocean Law Studies was unable to attend the meeting but his written paper on delimiting the Chinese continental shelves is included in the proceedings. The last speaker on current issues was Michael W. Lodge, chief legal officer of the International Seabed Authority. He discussed the role of the Authority with respect to the revenue sharing provisions in article 82.

The afternoon focus was on the resources of the continental shelf under the capable moderation of Ambassador Mary Beth West of the United States Department of State. A member of the United States Commission on the Oceans, Paul L. Kelly of Rowan Companies, Inc., surveyed the latest technological achievements in global deepwater drilling for oil and gas. Next, Gareth J. Allinson of Statoil (UK) Ltd.
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covered the new developments in oil exploration in the Northeast Atlantic. An expert from the Southampton Oceanography Centre, Lindsay Parson, then spoke on non-hydrocarbon resources such as placer deposits, polymetallic sulphides, gas hydrates and the like. The final substantive presentation on Panel VI was by Professor Peter M. Herzig of the Freiberg University of Mining and Technology, who spoke about seafloor massive sulfide deposits and hydrothermal systems.

The Conference concluded with closing remarks by Tomas H. Heidar on behalf of the Law of the Sea Institute of Iceland and John Norton Moore on behalf of the Center for Oceans Law and Policy, University of Virginia School of Law. The enthusiastic assessment of both co-sponsors was that the legal and scientific aspects of continental shelf limits had been thoroughly covered by an impressive sampling of the best experts in the world.