Launch of the Website of the Reports of International Arbitral Awards

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A. Introduction
In June 2007, the Codification Division, Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations, launched a new website (http://www.un.org/law/riaa/) dedicated to the publication Reports of International Arbitral Awards (RIAA). This event has given us an opportunity to provide a brief overview of the history and content of the collection, as well as a description of the accessibility of the electronic version thereof.

B. History and Content of the Reports of International Arbitral Awards
As noted in the foreword of the first volume of the RIAA, “[i]nternational arbitral and judicial awards are of considerable importance, for they are a ‘subsidiary means for the determination of the rules of law’ as provided in Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice. They are also important from the point of view of the progressive development of international law, a task which Article 13 of the Charter places under the responsibility of the General Assembly of the United Nations.”

The RIAA was first published in 1948 in order to provide a systematic compilation of international arbitral and judicial awards, which did not exist at the time, as a means to make such decisions more readily available to those national and international bodies dealing with questions of international law and to all others interested in its progressive development. The significance of the RIAA in this regard was highlighted by the International Law Commission during its second session at which it drew attention to the recent publication of the three

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first volumes of the RIAA in the context of its consideration of the item on ways and means for making the evidence of customary international law more readily available. The Commission thus recommended that additional series of the RIAA be published.³

At the time of the preparation of the first volume of the RIAA, in accordance with a decision by the Secretariat of the United Nations and the Registry of the International Court of Justice, the first three volumes of the RIAA were to be prepared by the Registry. It was considered that the Carnegie Library in the Peace Palace offered the best facilities for this project. The Registrar was authorized by the Court to assume this task on condition that it did not interfere in the work of the Court and that the responsibility of the Court was not involved. All subsequent volumes have been prepared by the Codification Division of the Office of Legal Affairs.

It was further decided that the publication be limited to international decisions, i.e., decisions rendered between States, and that awards between individuals or a body and a State be excluded.⁴ However, since 1948 there has been a significant increase in the number of international organizations with international legal personality involved in a wide range of activities, some of which have given rise to international dispute settlement proceedings involving significant issues of public international law. Therefore, the scope of the publication was expanded to include awards rendered in proceedings between States and international organizations.

The current collection of the RIAA consists of twenty-five completed volumes. Several more volumes are currently awaiting publication or are under preparation.

Volume XXVI will be dedicated to the Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission established to deal with claims arising from the war that took place between the two countries from 1998 to 2000. It will also contain further developments of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission relating to demarcation. The Boundary Commission’s decision regarding the delimitation of the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia of 13 April 2002 is published in volume XXV.

Volume XXVII will contain three awards relating to maritime issues, namely the report and recommendations to the governments of Iceland and Norway of the Conciliation Commission on the Continental Shelf area between Iceland and Jan Mayen of June 1981; the award and settlement agreement of the parties annexed thereto in the dispute concerning the Straits of Johor, between Malaysia and Singapore of 1 September 2005; and the award in the case concerning

³  Ibid., Part II, para. 90 (h).

⁴ An exception to this decision was made in volume XXIII, which included a case between private individuals and the Bank for International Settlements. The award was included since it addressed questions of general international law and not merely the interests of the private individuals concerned.