JAMAICA CONFERENCE CENTRE’S MAIN CHAMBER RENAMED “THE DR. KENNETH RATTRAY CONFERENCE ROOM”

The Plenary Conference Room, the main chamber of the Jamaica Conference Centre in Kingston which houses the headquarters of the International Seabed Authority was re-named “The Dr. Kenneth Rattray Conference Room” at a ceremony this morning witnessed by senior Jamaican Government officials, members of the Rattray family and officials of the Authority.

Speaking at the function which coincided with the ongoing 13th session of the Authority, Satya N. Nandan, Secretary-General of the Authority, said Dr. Rattray had a long and very active association with the Law of the Sea beginning from 1968 and contributed significantly over the years to the development of the Law of the Sea. His main preoccupation throughout was to ensure that Jamaica would be the headquarters of the Authority.

Senator G. Anthony Hylton, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, said the late Dr. Rattray was an outstanding Jamaican diplomat and jurist whose commitment to the development of international law placed him in a special category. He said Dr. Rattray would no doubt be proud of the strides the Authority had made to date to develop an appropriate regulatory framework for the future development of the mineral resources of the international deep seabed Area.

The Chairman of the various regional groups also paid tribute to Dr. Rattray, noting his contributions to the development of the Law of the Sea.

Speaking on behalf of the Rattray family, his son, Kenneth C. Rattray, Jnr thanked the Government of Jamaica, the Authority and delegations for the honour done his father.

Earlier Chief Olufolajimi Modupe Akintola, Nigeria, President of the Assembly of the Authority’s 13th session, in a short speech welcomed the guests and said Dr. Rattray was eminent and successful in the field of international law. She then handed over to Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, President of the Seabed Council and Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the Seabed Authority, who presided.
Satya N. Nandan, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, said Dr. Rattray had a long and very active association with the Law of the Sea beginning from 1968 when Jamaica was a member of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Seabed. That Committee in 1971, under the same title, became the Preparatory Committee for the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. He said that when the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea began in 1973, Dr. Rattray was elected Rapporteur-General of the Conference. He was again elected to that position when the Preparatory Commission began its work in Jamaica on the establishment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the sea.

In 1994, following the entry into force of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the establishment of the Authority in Kingston, Dr. Rattray was appointed by the Government of Jamaica as its first Permanent Representative to the Authority.

While Dr. Rattray contributed significantly over the years to the development of the Law of the Sea, his main preoccupation throughout was to ensure that Jamaica would be the headquarters of the International Seabed Authority, the Secretary-General said. When it became clear that Jamaica would be successful in securing the headquarters, the next preoccupation of Dr. Rattray was that the facilities would be available for the Authority to hold its meetings and establish its headquarters in Kingston. For that he persuaded the Government of Jamaica to build the magnificent conference Centre.

The Secretary-General expressed the Authority’s gratitude to the Government of Jamaica for the use of the Centre and to Dr. Rattray, who was the inspiration behind the creation of the Centre.

Regional Groups’ statements

The representative of the United Kingdom, speaking on behalf of the Western European and Other States, said Dr. Rattray would remain in their minds as one of the founding fathers of the Law of the Sea and of the Authority. He said Dr. Rattray served Jamaica with distinction. He was a man who devoted himself to the international community. As a representative of a common law country, he said he would like to honour Dr. Rattray’s memory. He said those who knew him still spoke of his many achievements. It was fitting that the conference room was being renamed in his honour.

South Africa’s representative, on behalf of the Group of African States, hailed Dr. Rattray’s strong defence of the principle of the deep seabed being the common heritage of all mankind. There was a need for a renewal of commitment to the ideals for which he fought. Dr. Rattray remained an inspiration for the work of the Authority, he said.

Speaking on behalf of the Asian Group, India’s representative recalled Dr. Rattray’s passion and work towards having Kingston as the headquarters of the International Seabed Authority. He was remembered for his warm and open personality as well as his intelligence and friendliness.
Poland, for the Eastern European Group, described the former head of the Jamaican delegation to the Authority as a pioneer and champion for the peaceful use of the oceans for the good of mankind. Renaming the conference room was a fitting tribute.

The representative of Honduras spoke for the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, calling Dr. Rattray a co-creator of the Law of the Sea, and a true friend of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the world at large.

**Minister’s statement**

In his statement, Senator G. Anthony Hylton, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, said the late Dr. Rattray was an outstanding Jamaican diplomat and jurist whose commitment to the development of international law placed him in a special category among those who had excelled at the international level.

He said Dr. Rattray’s dedication to public service spanned more than five decades and was almost legendary. As Solicitor-General of Jamaica, he appeared before the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London in groundbreaking civil, criminal, commercial, constitutional and human rights cases. In addition to acting as advisor on public sector reform and telecommunications reform, Dr. Rattray was Jamaica’s lead negotiator in several bilateral air transport agreements, international loans and natural resources exploration.

Dr. Rattray was best known for his association with international jurisprudence as it related to the Law of the Sea. He said he played a pivotal role in the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. He said Dr. Rattray strongly supported the establishment of appropriate institutional mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention, through the establishment of the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Dr. Rattray, the Minister said, would no doubt be proud of the strides made by the Authority to date to develop an appropriate regulatory framework for the future development of the mineral resources of the international seabed Area. He noted the tireless effort of Dr. Rattray which contributed to Jamaica’s selection as the seat of the Seabed Authority.

Noting that this year marked the 25th anniversary since the adoption and opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in Montego Bay, Jamaica, Minister Hylton said the Government of Jamaica felt that it would be a fitting tribute to the memory of Dr. Rattray to re-name the main conference room in his honour during the current session of the Authority.

Kenneth C. Rattray, Jnr, thanked the Government of Jamaica for the honour done his father. He had been deeply moved by the words of his father’s former colleagues and friends, he said, “Stewardship of the common heritage of mankind” was a common phrase in their household as they discussed the progress of the conferences on the law of the sea. He charged the delegates to be “guided by the spirit, philosophy and devotion to that noble cause and to maintain the stewardship”.

Mrs. Faith Rattray, widow of Dr. Kenneth Rattray, unveiled a plaque dedicating the Conference Room to his memory.

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