The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea has just celebrated 20 years of its existence. During this period, it has rendered several judgments, advisory opinions and orders on a wide range of issues concerning the law of the sea. The role of the Tribunal in the settlement of disputes relating to the law of the sea as well as its contribution to the development of the law of the sea are widely acknowledged.

In the life of a judicial institution, 20 years is a good enough period to make an assessment of its judicial activity. How is the Tribunal functioning and has it fulfilled the role assigned to it under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea? What are the working methods of the Tribunal and what is its distinct contribution in handling cases? Has the Tribunal contributed in any way to the fragmentation of the law of the sea, as some international lawyers feared? What are the relative advantages of a more wider utilization of the Tribunal in preference to the other available forums of settlement? An attempt is made here to answer these questions.

The present work is more than a text book. The aim of the authors in writing this book is to seek to provide a comprehensive and clear exposition of the Tribunal’s activities. It is hoped that it will prove useful to all those – practitioners and academics – who are interested in the work of the Tribunal.

The opinions expressed are solely those of the authors.

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