

PERMANENT COURT OF ARBITRATION

Peace Palace, Carnegieplein 2,
2517 KJ The Hague, The Netherlands

Telephone : +31 70 302 4165
Facsimile : +31 70 302 4167
E-mail : bureau@pca-cpa.org
Website : www.pca-cpa.org



COUR PERMANENTE D'ARBITRAGE

Palais de la Paix, Carnegieplein 2,
2517 KJ La Haye, Pays-Bas

Téléphone : +31 70 302 4165
Télécopie : +31 70 302 4167
Courriel : bureau@pca-cpa.org
Site Internet : www.pca-cpa.org

PRESS RELEASE

**Arbitration between the Republic of the Philippines
and the People's Republic of China**

The Hague, 24 November 2015

The Tribunal Commences Hearing on Merits

On Tuesday, 24 November 2015, the Tribunal commenced the hearing on the merits and remaining issues of jurisdiction and admissibility in the arbitration initiated by the Republic of the Philippines against the People's Republic of China under Annex VII to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The hearing is taking place in the Peace Palace, the headquarters of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, the Netherlands. The Arbitral Tribunal has decided not to open the hearing to the public. However, after receiving written requests from interested States Parties to the Convention, and having sought the views of the Parties, the Arbitral Tribunal has permitted the governments of Australia, the Republic of Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, to send small delegations as observers. The hearing will end on or before 30 November 2015. More details about the hearing, including photographs, will be published at that time.

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Background to the Case: The *Philippines v. China* arbitration commenced on 22 January 2013 when the Philippines served China with a Notification and Statement of Claim "with respect to the dispute with China over the maritime jurisdiction of the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea." On 19 February 2013, China presented the Philippines with a diplomatic note in which it described "the Position of China on the South China Sea issues," and rejected and returned the Philippines' Notification. China has since continued to reiterate its position of non-acceptance of and non-participation in the arbitration. Nonetheless, the Tribunal has noted that it remains open to China to participate in the proceedings at any time.

The five-member Arbitral Tribunal is chaired by Judge Thomas A. Mensah of Ghana. The other Members are Judge Jean-Pierre Cot of France, Judge Stanislaw Pawlak of Poland, Professor Alfred Soons of the Netherlands, and Judge Rüdiger Wolfrum of Germany. The PCA acts as Registry in the proceedings. Following hearings held between 7 and 13 July 2015, on 29 October 2015, the Tribunal rendered its [Award on Jurisdiction and Admissibility](#), a summary of which is contained in the PCA's [Press Release](#) of the same date. Further information about the case, including the Award on Jurisdiction and Admissibility, the Rules of Procedure, earlier Press Releases, and transcripts and photographs of the Hearing on Jurisdiction and Admissibility, may be found at <http://www.pcacases.com/web/view/7> or requested via e-mail.

Background to the PCA: The Permanent Court of Arbitration is an intergovernmental organization established by the 1899 Hague Convention on the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes. Headquartered at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Netherlands, the Permanent Court of Arbitration facilitates arbitration, conciliation, fact-finding and other dispute resolution proceedings among various combinations of States, State entities, intergovernmental organizations, and private parties.

Contact: Permanent Court of Arbitration; bureau@pca-cpa.org