Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Warmest thanks! And thank you Don Bettauer for your kind words! I feel greatly honoured to receive the Louis B. Sohn Award together with Lucinda Low.

That said, what we should now bear in mind is that the award is given to honour the legacy of Louis B. Sohn, an extraordinary personality and a prominent lawyer. When he died in 2006 at the age of 92 years he had made an extraordinary career, including participating in the conference in San Francisco in 1945 that elaborated the Charter of the United Nations. His focus at this time was very much on human rights and international environmental law. Together with other Americans, like John Norton Moore and Myron Nordquist, he was an influential contributor to the creation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982. For me, this is very special, since my focus has been very much on the law in these areas.

I would in this context like to mention in particular the law of the sea, for the simple reason that I had the honour of chairing the delegation of my country, Sweden, when we negotiated the delimitation of the exclusive economic zones in the Baltic Sea in the 1980s with the then Soviet Union, Poland and Finland.

And when I took up my position as the Legal Counsel of the United Nations in 1994, I had the privilege of chairing the final consultations on Part XI of UNCLOS that resulted in an agreement that was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 28 July 1994. Here I had great assistance by many including in particular by Satya Nandan. The UNCLOS entered into force on 16 November 1994.

This also meant that I had to oversee the establishment of the three organs under the Convention: the International Seabed Authority in Kingston, Jamaica, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg, Germany, and the Continental Shelf Commission that works in New York.

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs was charged with this task. And it therefore fell upon me to oversee this process – a very rewarding experience.

UNCLOS is definitely one of the most important treaties that have been elaborated under the auspices of the United Nations. I wonder what Luis B. Sohn would have said today if he was told that the U.S. has still not ratified UNCLOS.

At present, there are 168 parties to UNCLOS. Among the UN members there are 28 states that are still not parties. Of those states 15 are land-locked states so one can understand that
they may not be so interested in ratifying or acceding to the treaty.\footnote{These land-locked states are: Afghanistan, Andorra, Bhutan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Liechtenstein, Rwanda, San Marino, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.} However, the remaining 13 members are the United States of America, as already mentioned, and the following: Cambodia, Colombia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, El Salvador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Libya, Peru, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela. Does the United States of America belong in this group?

It is true that the U.S. respects the rules of the Convention, and there is a direct reference to “the law of the sea” in the so-called Ilulissat Declaration of 28 May 2008, which concerns the applicability of the law of the sea in the Arctic Ocean – an area one and a half times the size of the U.S.\footnote{See \url{https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/formidable/18/2008-Ilulissat-Declaration.pdf}.} However, it is extraordinary that the U.S. is still not a party to the Convention. I am not sure that this will happen during the present administration. But maybe the ABA should put this matter on its agenda in order to honour Louis B. Sohn and the other Americans who made such important contributions to the creation of one of the most important treaties in the world.

On this note, let me again thank the ABA warmly for the honour that you have bestowed on me. As I said, I feel greatly honoured.

Thank you for your attention!