



# INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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## Press Release

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**Visit to the International Court of Justice  
by the United Nations Secretary-General,  
H.E. Mr. António Guterres**

THE HAGUE, 22 December 2017. H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, today paid a visit to the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, at the Peace Palace in The Hague. He was accompanied by the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, H.E. Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares.

Mr. Guterres and Mr. Serpa Soares were received by the President of the Court, Judge Ronny Abraham, the Vice-President, Judge Abdulqawi Yusuf, and the Registrar, Mr. Philippe Couvreur. Views were exchanged on a number of subjects, including the importance of international justice, the role and activity of the Court, its current caseload and other matters of mutual interest.

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Guterres signed the Court's Visitors' Book.

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Photographs of the event will shortly be available on the Court's website ([www.icj-cij.org](http://www.icj-cij.org)).

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The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Charter in June 1945 and began its activities in April 1946. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York. The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States (its judgments have binding force and are without appeal for the parties concerned); and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and agencies of the system. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected for a nine-year term by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. Independent of the United Nations Secretariat, it is assisted by a Registry, its own international secretariat, whose activities are both judicial and diplomatic, as well as administrative. The official

languages of the Court are French and English. Also known as the “World Court”, it is the only court of a universal character with general jurisdiction.

The ICJ, a court open only to States for contentious proceedings, and to certain organs and institutions of the United Nations system for advisory proceedings, should not be confused with the other — mostly criminal — judicial institutions based in The Hague and adjacent areas, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY, an ad hoc court created by the Security Council), the International Criminal Court (ICC, the first permanent international criminal court, established by treaty, which does not belong to the United Nations system), the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL, an international judicial body with an independent legal personality, established by the United Nations Security Council upon the request of the Lebanese Government and composed of Lebanese and international judges), the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT, mandated to take over residual functions from the ICTY as well as from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania), the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor’s Office (an ad hoc judicial institution which has its seat in The Hague), or the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA, an independent institution which assists in the establishment of arbitral tribunals and facilitates their work, in accordance with the Hague Convention of 1899).

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