



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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Press Release

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Presentation of a gift to the International Court of Justice by the Republic of Cyprus

THE HAGUE, 18 November 2016. On 16 November, the Republic of Cyprus presented a gift to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, which has its seat at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

The gift, a replica of a limestone head of a statue found at the sanctuary of Aphrodite in the village of Arsos, was officially presented to the ICJ during a visit by H.E. Mr. Alexandros Zenon, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, to the Court.

Mr. Zenon, who was accompanied by H.E. Mr. Elpidoforos Economou, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was welcomed by H.E. Judge Ronny Abraham, President of the Court, and H.E. Mr. Philippe Couvreur, Registrar of the Court, in the presence of H.E. Mr. James Droushiotis, former Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The presentation ceremony was attended by Members of the Court, ambassadors and other dignitaries. During the ceremony, speeches were made by both Mr. Zenon and President Abraham.

Mr. Zenon opened his speech by underlining the Court's "crucial role in advancing justice, peace and rule-based international order worldwide". He noted that the confidence of Cyprus in the Court was "manifested very concretely" in 2002, with the recognition of the Court's compulsory jurisdiction through a declaration made under Article 36, paragraph 2, of its Statute. Mr. Zenon described the gift presented to the Court as one of the "finest examples of Early Hellenistic Cypriot sculpture" dating back to the third century BC. He concluded by conveying the appreciation of "the Government and the people of [his] country to the remarkable achievements of the [ICJ] for more than 70 years".

President Abraham, in turn, thanked Mr. Zenon and the Republic of Cyprus for the presentation of the gift on behalf of all the Members of the Court. He referred to Cyprus as a "State with a rich cultural and artistic heritage, which dates back to the origins of civilizations", adding that it is a country that has contributed to "the development and furtherance of international law". After providing a brief overview of the Court's judicial activity, President Abraham observed that the commitment and support of States to the promotion of the peaceful settlement of international disputes is crucial. He concluded by stating that the statue "shall find its place in the Peace Palace as a symbol of this support".

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), 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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