



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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The President of the Court informs the United Nations General Assembly that the Court's backlog of cases has essentially been cleared

THE HAGUE, 1 November 2007. Today, the President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Judge Rosalyn Higgins, reminded the United Nations General Assembly of the Court's goal to "clear [its] backlog of cases by 2008", adding that it had now "essentially reached that stage".

Addressing the representatives of the United Nations Member States meeting in New York on the occasion of the Court's presentation of its Report for the period of 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007, President Higgins said that "States thinking of coming to the . . . Court [ould] today be confident that as soon as they ha[d] finished their written exchanges, [the Court would] be able to move to the oral stage in a timely manner". "Some occasional delay in bringing on the oral hearings" will now be "a product of the choice of the States to ask for a further written round and not of any backlog in the Court", she stated.

The President of the Court went on to inform the United Nations General Assembly that, in addition to the hearings on the merits to begin next week in the case concerning Sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge (Malaysia/Singapore), the Court would hold hearings in January 2008 in the case concerning Certain Questions of Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (Djibouti v. France). She also mentioned that public hearings had been scheduled in the course of 2008 in the cases concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia and Montenegro) and Maritime Delimitation in the Black Sea (Romania v. Ukraine).

Review of the past judicial year

President Higgins noted that the Court had had a very productive year, with three Judgments already rendered, another under preparation, an Order on provisional measures, and hearings opening the next week.

She recalled that between 1 August 2006 and 31 July 2007, the Court had been seised of one new case (Certain Questions of Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (Djibouti v. France)) and had rendered two Judgments: one in the case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro) and another in the case concerning Ahmadou Sadio Diallo (Republic of Guinea v. Democratic Republic of the Congo). Within the period under review, the Court had also made an Order on provisional measures and had held hearings in three cases. Furthermore, the Court had three weeks ago rendered a Judgment in the case concerning Territorial and Maritime Dispute between Nicaragua and Honduras in the Caribbean Sea (Nicaragua v. Honduras). There were currently 11 cases pending before the Court.

A gesture from the United Nations sought

Highlighting the Court's "prodigious effort" to maintain its current efficiency, President Higgins reiterated the Court's request for the creation of nine P-2 law clerk posts, in order to "achieve a full complement of one law clerk for each Member of the Court". She stressed that "it remain[ed] the case that [Members of the Court needed] a law clerk each in view of the increasing number of fact-intensive cases and the rising importance of researching, analysing and evaluating diverse materials". She conceded, however, that "if [the Court was] granted a limited number of extra law clerks, of course that w[ould] be an appreciated gesture by the United Nations".

The President of the Court finally expressed concern regarding the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/262, which seriously affects the conditions of service of Members of the Court in that it "create[s] inequality among judges, which is prohibited under [the Court's] Statute".

The full text of the speech by the President of the Court to the United Nations General Assembly can be found on the Court's website (www.icj-cij.org). The Court's Report for the judicial year 2006-2007 is also available on the site.

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