



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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The President of the International Court of Justice assures the General Assembly that
“the Court is acutely aware that, with its rulings, it has a responsibility to serve
all Member States by safeguarding respect for the rule of law
in international relations”

THE HAGUE, 25 October 2018. Today, H.E. Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, President of the International Court of Justice, addressed the United Nations General Assembly in New York on the occasion of the presentation of the Court’s Annual Report 2017-2018, which covers the period from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018.

In his speech, the President gave a brief overview of the judicial activities of the Court and outlined the content of its decisions. He stated that, between 1 August 2017 — the beginning of the period covered by the Court’s report — and 25 October 2018, “the Court’s docket ha[d] remained extremely full, with 17 contentious cases and one advisory proceeding currently pending before it”, adding that a number of other cases had been disposed of over the past year. “Indeed it has been a particularly busy and productive period”, he observed.

President Yusuf spoke first of the six cases in which the Court had held public hearings during the period under review. He noted that the Court had heard the Parties’ oral arguments on the preliminary objections submitted by France in the case concerning Immunities and Criminal Proceedings (Equatorial Guinea v. France), and had later held hearings on the merits in the case concerning Obligation to Negotiate Access to the Pacific Ocean (Bolivia v. Chile). “[T]he Court heard the Parties’ oral arguments on two requests for the indication of provisional measures submitted, in turn, in the case concerning Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Qatar v. United Arab Emirates) and in the case concerning Alleged Violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America)”, he continued. President Yusuf also recalled that, in September 2018, the Court had heard the oral statements of the Participants in the proceedings concerning the General Assembly’s request for an advisory opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, and that, just this October, it had held hearings on the preliminary objections submitted by the United States of America in the case concerning Certain Iranian Assets (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America).

The President then recalled the four Judgments delivered by the Court during the same period, namely the Judgment on the question of compensation in the case concerning Certain Activities carried out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua), the one in the joined cases concerning Maritime Delimitation in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean

(Costa Rica v. Nicaragua) and the Land Boundary in the Northern Part of Isla Portillos (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua), the Judgment on the preliminary objections in the case concerning Immunities and Criminal Proceedings (Equatorial Guinea v. France) and that in the case concerning Obligation to Negotiate Access to the Pacific Ocean (Bolivia v. Chile).

The President further recalled that, during the same period, the Court had issued 17 Orders, noting that one addressed the admissibility of counter-claims in the case concerning Alleged Violations of Sovereign Rights and Maritime Spaces in the Caribbean Sea (Nicaragua v. Colombia), two related to requests for provisional measures in the cases concerning Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Qatar v. United Arab Emirates) and Alleged violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America), and the others concerned procedural matters.

The President also referred to six new cases brought before the Court since 1 August 2017, namely the contentious cases concerning the Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela), the Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Qatar v. United Arab Emirates), the Appeal Relating to the Jurisdiction of the ICAO Council under Article 84 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates v. Qatar), the Appeal Relating to the Jurisdiction of the ICAO Council under Article II, Section 2, of the 1944 International Air Services Transit Agreement (Bahrain, Egypt and United Arab Emirates v. Qatar), Alleged violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America) and the Relocation of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem (Palestine v. United States of America).

In closing, President Yusuf emphasized that the Court “ha[d] made every endeavour to fulfil the noble mission entrusted to it in terms of the advancement of international justice and the peaceful settlement of disputes between States”, and that it had “continued to focus its attention on many complex areas of international law raised by the multifaceted disputes brought before it”. He also recalled that, often, the thorny legal issues to which the Court must respond were central to the international community’s current concerns. “The Court is acutely aware in this connection that, with its rulings, it has a responsibility to serve all Member States by safeguarding respect for the rule of law in international relations”, the President concluded.

The full text of the address by the President of the Court to the United Nations General Assembly, as well as the Court’s Report for the judicial year 2017-2018, will be available shortly on the Court’s website, under the heading “The Court” (click on “Presidency” or “Annual Reports”, respectively).

Note: The Court’s press releases are prepared by its Registry for information purposes only and do not constitute official documents.

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 Court (ICC, the only permanent international criminal court, which was established by treaty and 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 International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT, mandated to take over residual functions from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda), 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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