Mr. Philippe Gautier elected Registrar of the International Court of Justice

THE HAGUE, 22 May 2019. At a private meeting held on 22 May 2019, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, elected Mr. Philippe Gautier, of Belgian nationality, to the post of Registrar. He will succeed Mr. Philippe Couvreur who is retiring on 1 July 2019 (see Press Release No. 2019/4).

Mr. Gautier is currently the Registrar of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), a post which he has held since 2001, having served as Deputy-Registrar of the same Tribunal from 1997 to 2001. Prior to that, he had held the positions of Deputy Director, Head of the Law of the Sea/Antarctica Office (1991-1995), and Director, Head of the Treaties Division (1995-1997), at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Gautier is a member of various scientific and learned bodies, extraordinary professor at the Université catholique de Louvain and a visiting professor at various other universities, where he lectures on several aspects of international law, in particular the law of the sea. He is also the author of numerous publications.

In accordance with Article 22 of the Rules of Court, Mr. Gautier has been elected for a term of seven years.

The functions of the Registrar are defined by the Rules of Court (Article 26). The Registrar assists the Court in the exercise of its judicial functions and is responsible for diplomatic relations between the Court and States. He is also responsible for all the departments and divisions of the Registry.

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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