



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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The best efforts are being made by the Court to respond to the high expectations of the international community for an expeditious handling of the cases referred to the International Court of Justice, the President of the ICJ declares before the United Nations General Assembly

THE HAGUE, 26 October 2011. Today, the President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, H.E. Judge Hisashi Owada, stated in an address to the United Nations General Assembly that “the best efforts are being made by the Court to respond to the high expectations of the international community for an expeditious handling of the cases referred to the International Court of Justice”.

“[G]iven a remarkable increase in the number of cases on the docket, the Court is now opining on more than a few cases on a parallel basis”, the President added.

President Owada was addressing representatives of the United Nations Member States meeting in New York on the occasion of the presentation of the Court’s Report for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2011.

In his address to the General Assembly, as is traditional, President Owada gave an overview of the judicial activities of the Court. Over the last 12 months, the Court has rendered multiple decisions in cases which “have involved States from all regions of the world, and have raised a broad range of legal questions”, he observed, before giving a synopsis of those cases in order of their entry in the Court’s General List.

The President of the Court also pointed out that “[i]n the three years of [his] presidency, the docket has never contained less than 15 cases. In fact, in the last ten years, there has been an average of at least 15 cases on the docket, and sometimes as many as 28 cases”.

President Owada went on to inform those present that “the substantive areas on which the Court is being asked to rule are broader in scope than ever before, with each case presenting distinct legal and factual elements”. Furthermore, he added that “cases are frequently made up of different incidental phases, from preliminary objections to provisional measures, to requests for intervention and interpretation [and that t]he Court has as a result been consistently handling cases in parallel and shortening the time between the closure of written proceedings and the opening of the oral proceedings”.

“In these times of unprecedented interconnection between States and peoples, it is my sincere belief that a firm reliance on international law must underpin any and all future developments on the global stage”, President Owada declared. “The International Court of Justice, as guardian of international law, is proud to play a vital role in our increasingly globalized world”, he added.

In conclusion, Judge Owada stated: “It is my hope that Member States will continue to rely on the International Court of Justice to assist them in the pacific settlement of their disputes and that more States will accept the Court’s jurisdiction, be that through a declaration under Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute, or through the signature of the many multilateral treaties which now contain compromissory clauses that refer disputes as to the interpretation or application of those treaties to the Court.”

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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 2010-2011, is available on the Court’s website (www.icj-cij.org), under the heading “The Court” (click on “Presidency” and/or “Annual Reports”).

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. It is assisted by a Registry, its international secretariat, whose activities are both judicial and diplomatic, as well as administrative. The official languages of the Court are French and English.

The ICJ, a civil 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 independent judicial institution composed of Lebanese and international judges, which is not a United Nations tribunal and does not form part of the Lebanese judicial system), or the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), an institution founded in 1899, which is independent of the United Nations.

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