



# INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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## Press Release

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### **International Day of Peace celebrated at the International Court of Justice**

THE HAGUE, 1 October 2012. On 21 September 2012, the International Day of Peace was celebrated at the Peace Palace in The Hague, seat of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The ceremony, organized by the City of The Hague and the Carnegie Foundation, was attended by H.E. Judge Bernardo Sepúlveda-Amor, Vice-President of the ICJ, H.E. Mr. Philippe Couvreur, Registrar of the Court, ambassadors, representatives of the Dutch authorities, officials from various international organizations and hundreds of children from local schools.

During the event, the Vice-President of the ICJ delivered a Message of Peace in which he expressed his conviction that there can be no higher or more urgent goal than peace. “Not only is the achievement of peace the most cherished aspiration of humankind, it is also the very raison d’être of the United Nations as well as the guiding thread of the work and activities of its organs”, he stressed.

Judge Sepúlveda-Amor emphasized that “[t]he maintenance of international peace through law is certainly the main function of the International Court of Justice as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations”. He noted that “[t]he Court discharges its responsibilities through the judicial settlement of disputes between States in accordance with international law, thus offering States an alternative to armed conflict”.

The Vice-President of the ICJ expressed his opinion that “to be lasting, peace must not be disassociated from notions of social justice, solidarity, equal access to the benefits of development and the uncompromising respect for human rights and the dignity and worth of every human being”. He invited everyone “to rise above the difficulties and renew our commitment to be active agents of peace”.

Speeches were also made by the Mayor of The Hague, Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Carnegie Foundation, which owns the Peace Palace, Mr. Bernard Bot.

At the end of the ceremony, the schoolchildren released white balloons into the air and the Mayor of The Hague gave the starting signal for a Peace Walk through the streets of The Hague, igniting the Torch of Peace.

The Message of Peace delivered by Vice-President Sepúlveda-Amor is available online at [www.icj-cij.org](http://www.icj-cij.org), under the heading “The Court” (click on “Presidency”, then on “Statements by the President”).

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The International Day of Peace was established by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in 1981 as an annual observance of global non-violence and ceasefire. It initially coincided with the opening of the United Nations General Assembly. From 2002 on, the date of 21 September was set as the permanent date for its celebration.

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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 independent judicial body 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 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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