



# INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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## Press Release

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### **Visit to the International Court of Justice by the President of the Hellenic Republic, H.E. Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos**

THE HAGUE, 5 July 2016. H.E. Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos, President of the Hellenic Republic, yesterday paid a visit to the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, at its seat at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

Mr. Pavlopoulos and his delegation were received in the Court's Deliberation Room by H.E. Mr. Ronny Abraham, President of the Court, several Members of the Court and the Registrar.

The meeting focused in particular on the role of the International Court of Justice in the settlement of legal disputes between States, the safeguarding of peace, and the development of international law.

President Abraham emphasized Greece's contribution to the beginnings of law, in particular those of international law, as attested by a great many ancient documents. He recalled that certain general principles of law originated in the Greek custom of using external arbitration to settle disputes between communities.

Describing the functioning of the Court to the Greek delegation, President Abraham observed that it "ha[d] had a particularly high level of activity over the past decade", with 14 cases currently before it, including three under deliberation. He went on to state that the Court had delivered two Judgments since the beginning of the year and that, in the course of the previous month, three new Applications had been filed, in cases covering a wide range of legal issues and involving States from South America, North America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. The President added that "The pace of the Court's activity over recent years shows that States are increasingly willing to use judicial means to settle certain disputes between them."

Having underlined how crucial the commitment of States was to promoting the peaceful settlement of international disputes, President Abraham thanked the Hellenic Republic for the confidence it showed in the Court. "That confidence is demonstrated in particular by the declaration recognizing the Court's compulsory jurisdiction which Greece renewed last year under Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute", he concluded.

Mr. Pavlopoulos, in turn, described his visit to the Court as "an institutional pilgrimage to the chief pillar of international justice". He declared that the ICJ was "the ideal" court for resolving inter-State disputes. The Greek President also noted that the Court's role had recently

acquired renewed importance; he saw this as being crucial in today's world, where the fundamental principles of democratic civilization were frequently under threat and in need of protection. In Mr. Pavlopoulos's view, the International Court of Justice stood at the forefront of international law and played a leading role in the maintenance of peace. He also confirmed the confidence that Greece placed in the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Pavlopoulos signed the Court's Visitors' Book and exchanged gifts with the President of the Court. He was given a short tour of the Peace Palace, during which he was shown a replica column of the Gortyn Code (fifth century BC), presented to the Court by Greece in 1999, and a copy, in white marble, of the throne which, according to legend, belonged to King Minos, and was found in the Palace of Knossos; this was a gift to the Peace Palace from the Greek Government in 1913.

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Photographs of the visit are available on the website of the Court ([www.icj-cij.org](http://www.icj-cij.org)) in the "Multimedia" section (click on "Events-related videos, photos and audio files" and go to the foot of the page).

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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 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), 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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