



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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“[T]he Court continued to fulfil its role as the international community of States’ forum of choice for the peaceful settlement of every kind of international dispute over which it has jurisdiction”, the President of the Court tells the United Nations General Assembly

THE HAGUE, 1 November 2012. Today, the President of the International Court of Justice, Judge Peter Tomka, informed the United Nations General Assembly that over the last 12 months the Court had “continued to fulfil its role as the international community of States’ forum of choice for the peaceful settlement of every kind of international dispute over which it has jurisdiction”. He added that the Court had “made every effort to meet the expectations of the parties appearing before it in a timely manner” and noted in that regard that, “since the Court has been able to clear its backlog of cases, States thinking of submitting cases to the principal judicial organ of the United Nations can be confident that, as soon as they have finished their written exchanges, the Court will be able to move to the hearings without delay”.

President Tomka 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 2011 to 31 July 2012.

During his speech, President Tomka presented a brief overview of the judicial activities of the Court over the last 12 months, pointing out that during the period under review as many as 15 contentious cases and one advisory procedure were pending before it and that the Court had delivered four Judgments and an Advisory Opinion and had held public hearings in four cases. He also confirmed that the next hearings to be held by the Court would begin on 3 December this year.

The President then reported on the key findings in the four Judgments and one Advisory Opinion rendered by the Court during the period under review.

President Tomka moved on to the subject of the refurbishment of the Great Hall of Justice in the Peace Palace, which he explained was “the first major renovation of th[e] Hall in 100 years”. “No renovation on the scale of the current project has previously been envisaged” he said, adding that “the newly-renovated Great Hall of Justice will be equipped with improved modern technical facilities offering a wide range of possibilities”. He assured those present that the Court would “continue to hear cases submitted to [it] faithfully and impartially, as required by the noble judicial mission entrusted to [it]”. He further underlined that the Court was “also modernizing the setting in which [it] exercise[d] this function” thus putting the “funds mobilized by the United Nations General Assembly to good use”.

President Tomka expressed his hope that “he had conveyed [to those present] the extent to which the Court seeks to meet the expectations of the international community as a whole”. He noted that “the Court must do its utmost to serve the noble purposes and goals of the United Nations using limited resources, since Members States award it less than 1 per cent, exactly 0,8 per cent, of the Organization’s regular budget”. “[T]he recent contributions of the Court are not to be measured in terms of the financial resources that sustain it, but against the great progress made by it in the advancement of international justice and the peaceful settlement of disputes between States”, he concluded.

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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 2011-2012, are available on the Court’s website (www.icj-cij.org), under the heading “The Court” (click on “Presidency” or “Annual Reports”, respectively).

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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