



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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Press Release

Unofficial

No. 2018/1

18 January 2018

Legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 **(Request for Advisory Opinion)**

The Court decides that the African Union is likely to be able to furnish information on the question submitted to the Court and extends the time-limits for the submission of written statements and of written comments

THE HAGUE, 18 January 2018. By an Order dated 17 January 2018, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, has decided that “the African Union, which is likely to be able to furnish information on the question submitted to the Court for an advisory opinion, may do so within the time-limits fixed by the Court” in the proceedings on the request for advisory opinion in respect of the Legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.

The Court has also extended to 1 March 2018 the time-limit for the filing of all written statements, in accordance with Article 66, paragraph 2, of its Statute, and to 15 May 2018 the time-limit within which States and organizations having presented written statements may submit written comments on the other written statements, in accordance with Article 66, paragraph 4, of the Statute.

This Order followed a letter dated 10 January 2018, by which the Legal Counsel of the African Union requested that this organization “(i) be permitted to furnish information, in writing and orally, on the question submitted to the Court for its advisory opinion and (ii) be granted an extension of one month for the filing of its written statement”.

The subsequent procedure has been reserved for further decision.

History of the proceedings

The history of the proceedings can be found in paragraphs 291-294 of the Court’s Annual Report for 2016-2017, available on the Court’s website (under the headings “The Court”/“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. 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 Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT, 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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