



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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Press Release

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The President of the International Court of Justice addresses the General Assembly:

The Court “stands ready, more than ever before, to continue its efforts to contribute, within the bounds of its Statute, to the protection and advancement of the international rule of law and to the peaceful settlement of disputes among States”

THE HAGUE, 3 November 2020. H.E. Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, President of the International Court of Justice, addressed the United Nations General Assembly yesterday on the occasion of the presentation of the Court’s Annual Report for the period from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, President Yusuf addressed the General Assembly by video link.

The President opened his pre-recorded statement by pointing out that, during the period under review, “the Court’s docket ha[d] remained full, with 15 contentious cases currently on its List, involving States from all regions of the world and touching on a wide range of issues”.

He indicated that, like other United Nations organs, in March 2020, the Court had “suddenly found itself having to deal with the restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic”, adding that the Court had “reacted very quickly to this exceptional situation” by adapting its working methods to the new circumstances. The President noted that, in addition to convening virtual internal meetings, the Court had successfully held hybrid public hearings. The President explained that for this purpose, the Court had “made specific changes to its Rules in order to clarify further the legal framework governing the holding of public sittings, allowing for virtual and in-person participation”. He pointed out that the Court had held hearings in five cases and delivered four decisions during the period under review. President Yusuf further stated that “four other cases [were currently] under deliberation, in relation to which the Court [would] render judgment before its triennial renewal in February 2021”.

Finally, the President assured the United Nations General Assembly that the Court “[stood] ready, more than ever before, to continue its efforts to contribute, within the bounds of its Statute, to the protection and advancement of the international rule of law and to the peaceful settlement of disputes among States”. Noting a decline in the inclusion in recently adopted international instruments of clauses providing for recourse to the Court, he called on the General Assembly to “take once again a leadership role in advocating for the continued inclusion, particularly in multilateral treaties, of such compromissory clauses”.

The full text of the address of the President of the Court to the United Nations General Assembly and the Court's Annual Report for the judicial year 2019-2020 are available on the Court's website, under the heading "The Court" (click on "Presidency" and "Annual Reports", respectively).

Note: The Court's press releases are prepared by its Registry for information purposes only and do not constitute official documents.

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 Court is composed of 15 judges elected for a nine-year term by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, through judgments which have binding force and are without appeal for the parties concerned, legal disputes submitted to it by States; and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and agencies of the system.

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