COUR INTERNATIONALE DE JUSTICE

RECUEIL DES ARRÊTS,
AVIS CONSULTATIFS ET ORDONNANCES

IMMUNITÉS JURIDICTIONNELLES DE L'ÉTAT

(ALLEMAGNE c. ITALIE ; GRÈCE (intervenant))

ARRÊT DU 3 FÉVRIER 2012

2012

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

REPORTS OF JUDGMENTS,
ADVISORY OPINIONS AND ORDERS

JURISDICTIONAL IMMUNITIES OF THE STATE

(GERMANY *v.* ITALY : GREECE intervening)

JUDGMENT OF 3 FEBRUARY 2012

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ARRÊT

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(GERMANY *v.* ITALY : GREECE intervening)

3 FEBRUARY 2012

JUDGMENT

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INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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JURISDICTIONAL IMMUNITIES OF THE STATE

(GERMANY *v.* ITALY : GREECE intervening)

Historical and factual background.

Peace Treaty of 1947 — Federal Compensation Law of 1953 — 1961 Agreements — 2000 Federal Law establishing the "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" Foundation — Proceedings before Italian courts — Cases involving Italian nationals — Cases involving Greek nationals.

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JUDGMENT

Present: *President* OWADA; *Vice-President* TOMKA; *Judges* KOROMA, SIMMA, ABRAHAM, KEITH, SEPÚLVEDA-AMOR, BENNOUNA, SKOTNIKOV, CANÇADO TRINDADE, YUSUF, GREENWOOD, XUE, DONOGHUE; *Judge* ad hoc GAJA; *Registrar* COUVREUR.

In the case concerning jurisdictional immunities of the State,

between

the Federal Republic of Germany,

represented by

H.E. Ms Susanne Wasum-Rainer, Ambassador, Director-General for Legal Affairs and Legal Adviser, Federal Foreign Office,
H.E. Mr. Heinz-Peter Behr, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Kingdom of the Netherlands,
Mr. Christian Tomuschat, former Member and Chairman of the International Law Commission, Professor emeritus of Public International Law at the Humboldt University of Berlin,

as Agents;

Mr. Andrea Gattini, Professor of Public International Law at the University of Padua,
Mr. Robert Kolb, Professor of Public International Law at the University of Geneva,

as Counsel and Advocates;

Mr. Guido Hildner, Head of the Public International Law Division, Federal Foreign Office,
Mr. Götz Schmidt-Bremme, Head of the International Civil, Trade and Tax Law Division, Federal Foreign Office,
Mr. Felix Neumann, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Kingdom of the Netherlands,
Mr. Gregor Schotten, Federal Foreign Office,
Mr. Klaus Keller, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Kingdom of the Netherlands,
Ms Susanne Achilles, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Kingdom of the Netherlands,
Ms Donate Arz von Straussenburg, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Kingdom of the Netherlands,

as Advisers;

Ms Fiona Kaltenborn,

as Assistant,

and

the Italian Republic,

represented by

H.E. Mr. Paolo Pucci di Benisichi, Ambassador and State Counsellor,

as Agent;

Mr. Giacomo Aiello, State Advocate,
H.E. Mr. Franco Giordano, Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the Kingdom of the Netherlands,

as Co-Agents;

Mr. Luigi Condorelli, Professor of International Law, University of Florence,

Mr. Pierre-Marie Dupuy, Professor of International Law, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, and University of Paris II (Panthéon-Assas),
Mr. Paolo Palchetti, Associate Professor of International Law, University of Macerata,
Mr. Salvatore Zappalà, Professor of International Law, University of Catania, Legal Adviser, Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations,

as Counsel and Advocates;

Mr. Giorgio Marrapodi, Minister Plenipotentiary, Head of the Service for Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Mr. Guido Cerboni, Minister Plenipotentiary, Co-ordinator for the countries of Central and Western Europe, Directorate-General for the European Union, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Mr. Roberto Bellelli, Legal Adviser, Embassy of Italy in the Kingdom of the Netherlands,
Ms Sarah Negro, First Secretary, Embassy of Italy in the Kingdom of the Netherlands,
Mr. Mel Marquis, Professor of Law, European University Institute, Florence,
Ms Francesca De Vittor, International Law Researcher, University of Macerata,

as Advisers,

with, as State permitted to intervene in the case,

the Hellenic Republic,

represented by

Mr. Stelios Perrakis, Professor of International and European Institutions, Panteion University of Athens,

as Agent;

H.E. Mr. Ioannis Economides, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to the Kingdom of the Netherlands,

as Deputy-Agent;

Mr. Antonis Bredimas, Professor of International Law, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens,

as Counsel and Advocate;

Ms Maria-Daniella Marouda, Lecturer in International Law, Panteion University of Athens,

as Counsel,

THE COURT,

composed as above,

after deliberation,

delivers the following Judgment:

1. On 23 December 2008, the Federal Republic of Germany (hereinafter "Germany") filed in the Registry of the Court an Application instituting proceedings against the Italian Republic (hereinafter "Italy") in respect of a dispute originating in "violations of obligations under international law" allegedly committed by Italy through its judicial practice "in that it has failed to respect the jurisdictional immunity which . . . Germany enjoys under international law".

As a basis for the jurisdiction of the Court, Germany, in its Application, invoked Article 1 of the European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes of 29 April 1957.

2. Under Article 40, paragraph 2, of the Statute, the Registrar immediately communicated the Application to the Government of Italy; and, pursuant to paragraph 3 of that Article, all other States entitled to appear before the Court were notified of the Application.

3. Since the Court included upon the Bench no judge of Italian nationality, Italy exercised its right under Article 31, paragraph 2, of the Statute to choose a judge *ad hoc* to sit in the case: it chose Mr. Giorgio Gaja.

4. By an Order of 29 April 2009, the Court fixed 23 June 2009 as the time-limit for the filing of the Memorial of Germany and 23 December 2009 as the time-limit for the filing of the Counter-Memorial of Italy; those pleadings were duly filed within the time-limits so prescribed. The Counter-Memorial of Italy included a counter-claim "with respect to the question of the reparation owed to Italian victims of grave violations of international humanitarian law committed by forces of the German Reich".

5. By an Order of 6 July 2010, the Court decided that the counter-claim presented by Italy was inadmissible as such under Article 80, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Court. By the same Order, the Court authorized Germany to submit a Reply and Italy to submit a Rejoinder, and fixed 14 October 2010 and 14 January 2011 respectively as the time-limits for the filing of those pleadings; those pleadings were duly filed within the time-limits so prescribed.

6. On 13 January 2011, the Hellenic Republic (hereinafter "Greece") filed in the Registry an Application for permission to intervene in the case pursuant to Article 62 of the Statute. In its Application, Greece indicated that it "[did] not seek to become a party to the case".

7. In accordance with Article 83, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Court, the Registrar, by letters dated 13 January 2011, transmitted certified copies of the Application for permission to intervene to the Government of Germany and the Government of Italy, which were informed that the Court had fixed 1 April 2011 as the time-limit for the submission of their written observations on that Application. The Registrar also transmitted, under paragraph 2 of the same Article, a copy of the Application to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

8. Germany and Italy each submitted written observations on Greece's Application for permission to intervene within the time-limit thus fixed. The

Registry transmitted to each Party a copy of the other's observations, and copies of the observations of both Parties to Greece.

9. In light of Article 84, paragraph 2, of the Rules of Court, and taking into account the fact that neither Party filed an objection, the Court decided that it was not necessary to hold hearings on the question whether Greece's Application for permission to intervene should be granted. The Court nevertheless decided that Greece should be given an opportunity to comment on the observations of the Parties and that the latter should be allowed to submit additional written observations on the question. The Court fixed 6 May 2011 as the time-limit for the submission by Greece of its own written observations on those of the Parties, and 6 June 2011 as the time-limit for the submission by the Parties of additional observations on Greece's written observations. The observations of Greece and the additional observations of the Parties were submitted within the time-limits thus fixed. The Registry duly transmitted to the Parties a copy of the observations of Greece; it transmitted to each of the Parties a copy of the other's additional observations and to Greece copies of the additional observations of both Parties.

10. By an Order of 4 July 2011, the Court authorized Greece to intervene in the case as a non-party, in so far as this intervention was limited to the decisions of Greek courts which were declared by Italian courts as enforceable in Italy. The Court further fixed the following time-limits for the filing of the written statement and the written observations referred to in Article 85, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Court: 5 August 2011 for the written statement of Greece and 5 September 2011 for the written observations of Germany and Italy on that statement.

11. The written statement of Greece and the written observations of Germany were duly filed within the time-limits so fixed. By a letter dated 1 September 2011, the Agent of Italy indicated that the Italian Republic would not be presenting observations on the written statement of Greece at that stage of the proceedings, but reserved "its position and right to address certain points raised in the written statement, as necessary, in the course of the oral proceedings". The Registry duly transmitted to the Parties a copy of the written statement of Greece; it transmitted to Italy and Greece a copy of the written observations of Germany.

12. Under Article 53, paragraph 2, of its Rules, the Court, after ascertaining the views of the Parties, decided that copies of the pleadings and documents annexed would be made available to the public at the opening of the oral proceedings. After consulting the Parties and Greece, the Court decided that the same should apply to the written statement of the intervening State and the written observations of Germany on that statement.

13. Public hearings were held from 12 to 16 September 2011, at which the Court heard the oral arguments and replies of:

For Germany: Ms Susanne Wasum-Rainer,
Mr. Christian Tomuschat,
Mr. Andrea Gattini,
Mr. Robert Kolb.

For Italy: Mr. Giacomo Aiello,
Mr. Luigi Condorelli,
Mr. Salvatore Zappalà,
Mr. Paolo Palchetti,
Mr. Pierre-Marie Dupuy.

For Greece: Mr. Stelios Perrakis,
Mr. Antonis Bredimas.

14. At the hearings, questions were put by Members of the Court to the Parties and to Greece, as intervening State, to which replies were given in writing. The Parties submitted written comments on those written replies.

*

15. In its Application, Germany made the following requests:

"Germany prays the Court to adjudge and declare that the Italian Republic:

(1) by allowing civil claims based on violations of international humanitarian law by the German Reich during World War II from September 1943 to May 1945, to be brought against the Federal Republic of Germany, committed violations of obligations under international law in that it has failed to respect the jurisdictional immunity which the Federal Republic of Germany enjoys under international law;
(2) by taking measures of constraint against 'Villa Vigoni', German State property used for government non-commercial purposes, also committed violations of Germany's jurisdictional immunity;

(3) by declaring Greek judgments based on occurrences similar to those defined above in request No. 1 enforceable in Italy, committed a further breach of Germany's jurisdictional immunity.

Accordingly, the Federal Republic of Germany prays the Court to adjudge and declare that

(4) the Italian Republic's international responsibility is engaged;
(5) the Italian Republic must, by means of its own choosing, take any and all steps to ensure that all the decisions of its courts and other judicial authorities infringing Germany's sovereign immunity become unenforceable;
(6) the Italian Republic must take any and all steps to ensure that in the future Italian courts do not entertain legal actions against Germany founded on the occurrences described in request No. 1 above."

16. In the course of the written proceedings the following submissions were presented by the Parties:

On behalf of the Government of Germany,

in the Memorial and in the Reply:

"Germany prays the Court to adjudge and declare that the Italian Republic:

(1) by allowing civil claims based on violations of international humanitarian law by the German Reich during World War II from September 1943 to May 1945, to be brought against the Federal Republic of Germany, committed violations of obligations under international law in that it has failed to respect the jurisdictional immunity which the Federal Republic of Germany enjoys under international law;

(2) by taking measures of constraint against 'Villa Vigoni', German State property used for government non-commercial purposes, also committed violations of Germany's jurisdictional immunity;

(3) by declaring Greek judgments based on occurrences similar to those defined above in request No. 1 enforceable in Italy, committed a further breach of Germany's jurisdictional immunity.

Accordingly, the Federal Republic of Germany prays the Court to adjudge and declare that

(4) the Italian Republic's international responsibility is engaged;
(5) the Italian Republic must, by means of its own choosing, take any and all steps to ensure that all the decisions of its courts and other judicial authorities infringing Germany's sovereign immunity become unenforceable;
(6) the Italian Republic must take any and all steps to ensure that in the future Italian courts do not entertain legal actions against Germany founded on the occurrences described in request No. 1 above."

On behalf of the Government of Italy,

in the Counter-Memorial and in the Rejoinder:

"On the basis of the facts and arguments set out [in Italy's Counter-Memorial and Rejoinder], and reserving its right to supplement or amend these Submissions, Italy respectfully requests that the Court adjudge and declare that all the claims of Germany are rejected."

17. At the oral proceedings, the following submissions were presented by the Parties:

On behalf of the Government of Germany,

"Germany respectfully requests the Court to adjudge and declare that the Italian Republic:

(1) by allowing civil claims based on violations of international humanitarian law by the German Reich during World War II between September 1943 and May 1945 to be brought against the Federal Republic of Germany, committed violations of obligations under international law in that it has failed to respect the jurisdictional immunity which the Federal Republic of Germany enjoys under international law;

(2) by taking measures of constraint against 'Villa Vigoni', German State property used for government non-commercial purposes, also committed violations of Germany's jurisdictional immunity;

(3) by declaring Greek judgments based on occurrences similar to those defined above in request No. 1 enforceable in Italy, committed a further breach of Germany's jurisdictional immunity.

Accordingly, the Federal Republic of Germany respectfully requests the Court to adjudge and declare that:

(4) the Italian Republic's international responsibility is engaged;
(5) the Italian Republic must, by means of its own choosing, take any and all steps to ensure that all the decisions of its courts and other judicial authorities infringing Germany's sovereign immunity become unenforceable; and
(6) the Italian Republic must take any and all steps to ensure that in the future Italian courts do not entertain legal actions against Germany founded on the occurrences described in request No. 1 above."

On behalf of the Government of Italy,

"[F]or the reasons given in [its] written and oral pleadings, [Italy requests] that the Court adjudge and hold the claims of the Applicant to be unfounded. This request is subject to the qualification that . . . Italy has no objection to any decision by the Court obliging Italy to ensure that the mortgage on Villa Vigoni inscribed at the land registry is cancelled."

*

18. At the end of the written statement submitted by it in accordance with Article 85, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Court, Greece stated *inter alia*

"that the effect of the judgment that the ICJ will hand down in this case concerning the jurisdictional immunity of the State will be of major importance to the Italian legal order and certainly to the Greek legal order.

. . . . . .

Further, an ICJ decision on the effects of the principle of jurisdictional immunity of States when faced with a *jus cogens* rule of international law — such as the prohibition on violation of fundamental rules of humanitarian law — will guide the Greek courts in this regard. It will thus have a significant effect on pending and potential lawsuits brought by individuals before those courts."

19. At the end of the oral observations submitted by it with respect to the subject-matter of the intervention in accordance with Article 85, paragraph 3, of the Rules of Court, Greece stated *inter alia*:

"A decision of the International Court of Justice on the effects of the principle of jurisdictional immunity of States when faced with a *jus cogens* rule of international law — such as the prohibition on violation of fundamental rules of humanitarian law — will guide the Greek courts . . . It will thus have a significant effect on pending and potential lawsuits brought by individuals before those courts.

. . . . . .

The Greek Government considers that the effect of the judgment that [the] Court will hand down in this case concerning jurisdictional immunity will be of major importance, primarily to the Italian legal order and certainly to the Greek legal order."

* * *

I. Historical and Factual Background

20. The Court finds it useful at the outset to describe briefly the historical and factual background of the case which is largely uncontested between the Parties.

21. In June 1940, Italy entered the Second World War as an ally of the German Reich. In September 1943, following the removal of Mussolini from power, Italy surrendered to the Allies and, the following month, declared war on Germany. German forces, however, occupied much of Italian territory and, between October 1943 and the end of the War, perpetrated many atrocities against the population of that territory, including massacres of civilians and the deportation of large numbers of civilians for use as forced labour. In addition, German forces took prisoner, both inside Italy and elsewhere in Europe, several hundred thousand members of the Italian armed forces. Most of these prisoners (hereinafter the "Italian military internees") were denied the status of prisoner of war and deported to Germany and German-occupied territories for use as forced labour.

1. The Peace Treaty of 1947

22. On 10 February 1947, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Allied Powers concluded a Peace Treaty with Italy, regulating, in particular, the legal and economic consequences of the war with Italy. Article 77 of the Peace Treaty reads as follows:

> "1. From the coming into force of the present Treaty property in Germany of Italy and of Italian nationals shall no longer be treated as enemy property and all restrictions based on such treatment shall be removed.
>
> 2. Identifiable property of Italy and of Italian nationals removed by force or duress from Italian territory to Germany by German forces or authorities after September 3, 1943, shall be eligible for restitution.
>
> 3. The restoration and restitution of Italian property in Germany shall be effected in accordance with measures which will be determined by the Powers in occupation of Germany.
>
> 4. Without prejudice to these and to any other dispositions in favour of Italy and Italian nationals by the Powers occupying Germany, Italy waives on its own behalf and on behalf of Italian nationals all claims against Germany and German nationals outstanding on May 8, 1945, except those arising out of contracts and other obligations entered into, and rights acquired, before September 1, 1939. This waiver shall be deemed to include debts, all intergovernmental claims in respect of arrangements entered into in the

course of the war, and all claims for loss or damage arising during the war."

2. The Federal Compensation Law of 1953

23. In 1953, the Federal Republic of Germany adopted the Federal Compensation Law concerning Victims of National Socialist Persecution (*Bundesentschädigungsgesetz* (BEG)) in order to compensate certain categories of victims of Nazi persecution. Many claims by Italian nationals under the Federal Compensation Law were unsuccessful, either because the claimants were not considered victims of national Socialist persecution within the definition of the Federal Compensation Law, or because they had no domicile or permanent residence in Germany, as required by that Law. The Federal Compensation Law was amended in 1965 to cover claims by persons persecuted because of their nationality or their membership in a non-German ethnic group, while requiring that the persons in question had refugee status on 1 October 1953. Even after the Law was amended in 1965, many Italian claimants still did not qualify for compensation because they did not have refugee status on 1 October 1953. Because of the specific terms of the Federal Compensation Law as originally adopted and as amended in 1965, claims brought by victims having foreign nationality were generally dismissed by the German courts.

3. The 1961 Agreements

24. On 2 June 1961, two Agreements were concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy. The first Agreement, which entered into force on 16 September 1963, concerned the "settlement of certain property-related, economic and financial questions". Under Article 1 of that Agreement, Germany paid compensation to Italy for "outstanding questions of an economic nature". Article 2 of the Agreement provided as follows:

"(1) The Italian Government declares all outstanding claims on the part of the Italian Republic or Italian natural or legal persons against the Federal Republic of Germany or German natural or legal persons to be settled to the extent that they are based on rights and circumstances which arose during the period from 1 September 1939 to 8 May 1945.

(2) The Italian Government shall indemnify the Federal Republic of Germany and German natural or legal persons for any possible judicial proceedings or other legal action by Italian natural or legal persons in relation to the above-mentioned claims."

25. The second Agreement, which entered into force on 31 July 1963, concerned "compensation for Italian nationals subjected to National-Socialist measures of persecution". By virtue of this Agreement, the Federal Republic of Germany undertook to pay compensation to Italian nationals affected by those measures. Under Article 1 of that Agreement, Germany agreed to pay Italy forty million Deutsche marks

> "for the benefit of Italian nationals who, on grounds of their race, faith or ideology were subjected to National-Socialist measures of persecution and who, as a result of those persecution measures, suffered loss of liberty or damage to their health, and for the benefit of the dependents of those who died in consequence of such measures".

Article 3 of that Agreement provided as follows:

> "Without prejudice to any rights of Italian nationals based on German compensation legislation, the payment provided for in Article 1 shall constitute final settlement between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Italian Republic of all questions governed by the present Treaty."

4. Law Establishing the "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" Foundation

26. On 2 August 2000, a federal law was adopted in Germany, establishing a "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" Foundation (hereinafter the "2000 Federal Law") to make funds available to individuals who had been subjected to forced labour and "other injustices from the National Socialist period" (Sec. 2, para. 1). The Foundation did not provide money directly to eligible individuals under the 2000 Federal Law but instead to "partner organizations", including the International Organization for Migration in Geneva. Article 11 of the 2000 Federal Law placed certain limits on entitlement to compensation. One effect of this provision was to exclude from the right to compensation those who had had the status of prisoner of war, unless they had been detained in concentration camps or came within other specified categories. The reason given in the official commentary to this provision, which accompanied the draft law, was that prisoners of war "may, according to the rules of international law, be put to work by the detaining power" *[translation by the Registry]* (*Bundestagsdrucksache* 14/3206, 13 April 2000).

Thousands of former Italian military internees, who, as noted above, had been denied the status of prisoner of war by the German Reich (see paragraph 21), applied for compensation under the 2000 Federal Law. In 2001, the German authorities took the view that, under the rules of inter-

national law, the German Reich had not been able unilaterally to change the status of the Italian military internees from prisoners of war to that of civilian workers. Therefore, according to the German authorities, the Italian military internees had never lost their prisoner-of-war status, with the result that they were excluded from the benefits provided under the 2000 Federal Law. On this basis, an overwhelming majority of requests for compensation lodged by Italian military internees was rejected. Attempts by former Italian military internees to challenge that decision and seek redress in the German courts were unsuccessful. In a number of decisions, German courts ruled that the individuals in question were not entitled to compensation under the 2000 Federal Law because they had been prisoners of war. On 28 June 2004, a Chamber of the German Constitutional Court *(Bundesverfassungsgericht)* held that Article 11, paragraph 3, of the 2000 Federal Law, which excluded reparation for prisoners of war, did not violate the right to equality before the law guaranteed by the German Constitution, and that public international law did not establish an individual right to compensation for forced labour.

A group of former Italian military internees filed an application against Germany before the European Court of Human Rights on 20 December 2004. On 4 September 2007, a Chamber of that Court declared that the application was "incompatible *ratione materiae*" with the provisions of the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its protocols and therefore was declared inadmissible (*Associazione Nazionale Reduci and 275 Others* v. *Germany*, decision of 4 September 2007, application No. 45563/04).

5. Proceedings before Italian Courts

A. Cases involving Italian nationals

27. On 23 September 1998, Mr. Luigi Ferrini, an Italian national who had been arrested in August 1944 and deported to Germany, where he was detained and forced to work in a munitions factory until the end of the war, instituted proceedings against the Federal Republic of Germany in the Court of Arezzo *(Tribunale di Arezzo)* in Italy. On 3 November 2000, the Court of Arezzo decided that Mr. Luigi Ferrini's claim was inadmissible because Germany, as a sovereign State, was protected by jurisdictional immunity. By a judgment of 16 November 2001, registered on 14 January 2002, the Court of Appeal of Florence *(Corte di Appello di Firenze)* dismissed the appeal of the claimant on the same grounds. On 11 March 2004, the Italian Court of Cassation *(Corte di Cassazione)* held that Italian courts had jurisdiction over the claims for compensation brought against Germany by Mr. Luigi Ferrini on the ground that immunity does not apply in circumstances in which the act complained of constitutes an international crime (*Ferrini* v. *Federal Republic of Germany*, decision No. 5044/2004 (*Rivista di diritto internazionale*, Vol. 87, 2004, p. 539; *International Law Reports (ILR)*, Vol. 128, p. 658)). The case was

then referred back to the Court of Arezzo, which held in a judgment dated 12 April 2007 that, although it had jurisdiction to entertain the case, the claim to reparation was time-barred. The judgment of the Court of Arezzo was reversed on appeal by the Court of Appeal of Florence, which held in a judgment dated 17 February 2011 that Germany should pay damages to Mr. Luigi Ferrini as well as his case-related legal costs incurred in the course of the judicial proceedings in Italy. In particular, the Court of Appeal of Florence held that jurisdictional immunity is not absolute and cannot be invoked by a State in the face of acts by that State which constitute crimes under international law.

28. Following the *Ferrini* judgment of the Italian Court of Cassation dated 11 March 2004, twelve claimants brought proceedings against Germany in the Court of Turin *(Tribunale di Torino)* on 13 April 2004 in the case concerning *Giovanni Mantelli and Others*. On 28 April 2004, Liberato Maietta filed a case against Germany before the Court of Sciacca *(Tribunale di Sciacca)*. In both cases, which relate to acts of deportation to, and forced labour in, Germany which took place between 1943 and 1945, an interlocutory appeal requesting a declaration of lack of jurisdiction ("regolamento preventivo di giurisdizione") was filed by Germany before the Italian Court of Cassation. By two orders of 29 May 2008 issued in the *Giovanni Mantelli and Others* and the *Liberato Maietta* cases (order No. 14201 (Mantelli), *Foro italiano*, Vol. 134, 2009, I, p. 1568; order No. 14209 (Maietta), *Rivista di diritto internazionale*, Vol. 91, 2008, p. 896), the Italian Court of Cassation confirmed that the Italian courts had jurisdiction over the claims against Germany. A number of similar claims against Germany are currently pending before Italian courts.

29. The Italian Court of Cassation also confirmed the reasoning of the *Ferrini* judgment in a different context in proceedings brought against Mr. Max Josef Milde, a member of the "Hermann Göring" division of the German armed forces, who was charged with participation in massacres committed on 29 June 1944 in Civitella (Val di Chiana), Cornia and San Pancrazio in Italy. The Military Court of La Spezia *(Tribunale Militare di La Spezia)* sentenced Mr. Milde *in absentia* to life imprisonment and ordered Mr. Milde and Germany, jointly and severally, to pay reparation to the successors in title of the victims of the massacre who appeared as civil parties in the proceedings (judgment of 10 October 2006 (registered on 2 February 2007)). Germany appealed to the Military Court of Appeals in Rome *(Corte Militare di Appello di Roma)* against that part of the decision, which condemned it. On 18 December 2007 the Military Court of Appeals dismissed the appeal. In a judgment of 21 October 2008 (registered on 13 January 2009), the Italian Court of Cassation rejected Germany's argument of lack of jurisdiction and confirmed its reasoning in the *Ferrini* judgment that in cases of crimes under international law, the jurisdictional immunity of States should be set aside (*Rivista di diritto internazionale*, Vol. 92, 2009, p. 618).

B. Cases involving Greek nationals

30. On 10 June 1944, during the German occupation of Greece, German armed forces committed a massacre in the Greek village of Distomo, involving many civilians. In 1995, relatives of the victims of the massacre who claimed compensation for loss of life and property commenced proceedings against Germany. The Greek Court of First Instance *(Protodikeio)* of Livadia rendered a judgment in default on 25 September 1997 (and read out in court on 30 October 1997) against Germany and awarded damages to the successors in title of the victims of the massacre. Germany's appeal of that judgment was dismissed by the Hellenic Supreme Court *(Areios Pagos)* on 4 May 2000 (*Prefecture of Voiotia* v. *Federal Republic of Germany*, case No. 11/2000 (*ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 513) (the *Distomo* case)). Article 923 of the Greek Code of Civil Procedure requires authorization from the Minister for Justice to enforce a judgment against a foreign State in Greece. That authorization was requested by the claimants in the *Distomo* case but was not granted. As a result, the judgments against Germany have remained unexecuted in Greece.

31. The claimants in the *Distomo* case brought proceedings against Greece and Germany before the European Court of Human Rights alleging that Germany and Greece had violated Article 6, paragraph 1, of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to that Convention by refusing to comply with the decision of the Court of First Instance of Livadia dated 25 September 1997 (as to Germany) and failing to permit execution of that decision (as to Greece). In its decision of 12 December 2002, the European Court of Human Rights, referring to the rule of State immunity, held that the claimants' application was inadmissible (*Kalogeropoulou and Others* v. *Greece and Germany*, application No. 59021/00, decision of 12 December 2002, *ECHR Reports* 2002-X, p. 417; *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 537).

32. The Greek claimants brought proceedings before the German courts in order to enforce in Germany the judgment rendered on 25 September 1997 by the Greek Court of First Instance of Livadia, as confirmed on 4 May 2000 by the Hellenic Supreme Court. In its judgment of 26 June 2003, the German Federal Supreme Court *(Bundesgerichtshof)* held that those Greek judicial decisions could not be recognized within the German legal order because they had been given in breach of Germany's entitlement to State immunity (*Greek Citizens* v. *Federal Republic of Germany*, case No. III ZR 245/98, *Neue Juristische Wochenschrift (NJW)*, 2003, p. 3488; *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 556).

33. The Greek claimants then sought to enforce the judgments of the Greek courts in the *Distomo* case in Italy. The Court of Appeal of Florence held in a decision dated 2 May 2005 (registered on 5 May 2005) that the order contained in the judgment of the Hellenic Supreme Court,

imposing an obligation on Germany to reimburse the legal expenses for the judicial proceedings before that Court, was enforceable in Italy. In a decision dated 6 February 2007 (registered on 22 March 2007), the Court of Appeal of Florence rejected the objection raised by Germany against the decision of 2 May 2005 (*Foro italiano*, Vol. 133, 2008, I, p. 1308). The Italian Court of Cassation, in a judgment dated 6 May 2008 (registered on 29 May 2008), confirmed the ruling of the Court of Appeal of Florence (*Rivista di diritto internazionale*, Vol. 92, 2009, p. 594).

34. Concerning the question of reparations to be paid to Greek claimants by Germany, the Court of Appeal of Florence declared, by a decision dated 13 June 2006 (registered on 16 June 2006), that the judgment of the Court of First Instance of Livadia dated 25 September 1997 was enforceable in Italy. In a judgment dated 21 October 2008 (registered on 25 November 2008), the Court of Appeal of Florence rejected the objection by the German Government against the decision of 13 June 2006. The Italian Court of Cassation, in a judgment dated 12 January 2011 (registered on 20 May 2011), confirmed the ruling of the Court of Appeal of Florence.

35. On 7 June 2007, the Greek claimants, pursuant to the decision by the Court of Appeal of Florence of 13 June 2006, registered with the Como provincial office of the Italian Land Registry *(Agenzia del Territorio)* a legal charge *(ipoteca giudiziale)* over Villa Vigoni, a property of the German State near Lake Como. The State Legal Service for the District of Milan *(Avvocatura Distrettuale dello Stato di Milano)*, in a submission dated 6 June 2008 and made before the Court of Como *(Tribunale di Como)*, maintained that the charge should be cancelled. Under Decree-Law No. 63 of 28 April 2010, Law No. 98 of 23 June 2010 and Decree-Law No. 216 of 29 December 2011, the legal charge was suspended pending the decision of the International Court of Justice in the present case.

36. Following the institution of proceedings in the *Distomo* case in 1995, another case was brought against Germany by Greek nationals before Greek courts — referred to as the *Margellos* case — involving claims for compensation for acts committed by German forces in the Greek village of Lidoriki in 1944. In 2001, the Hellenic Supreme Court referred that case to the Special Supreme Court *(Anotato Eidiko Dikastirio)*, which, in accordance with Article 100 of the Constitution of Greece, has jurisdiction in relation to "the settlement of controversies regarding the determination of generally recognized rules of international law" *[translation by the Registry]*, requesting it to decide whether the rules on State immunity covered acts referred to in the *Margellos* case. By a decision of 17 September 2002, the Special Supreme Court found that, in the present state of development of international law, Germany was entitled to State immunity (*Margellos* v. *Federal Republic of Germany*, case No. 6/2002, *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 525).

II. The Subject-Matter of the Dispute and the Jurisdiction of the Court

37. The submissions presented to the Court by Germany have remained unchanged throughout the proceedings (see paragraphs 15, 16 and 17 above).

Germany requests the Court, in substance, to find that Italy has failed to respect the jurisdictional immunity which Germany enjoys under international law by allowing civil claims to be brought against it in the Italian courts, seeking reparation for injuries caused by violations of international humanitarian law committed by the German Reich during the Second World War; that Italy has also violated Germany's immunity by taking measures of constraint against Villa Vigoni, German State property situated in Italian territory; and that it has further breached Germany's jurisdictional immunity by declaring enforceable in Italy decisions of Greek civil courts rendered against Germany on the basis of acts similar to those which gave rise to the claims brought before Italian courts. Consequently, the Applicant requests the Court to declare that Italy's international responsibility is engaged and to order the Respondent to take various steps by way of reparation.

38. Italy, for its part, requests the Court to adjudge Germany's claims to be unfounded and therefore to reject them, apart from the submission regarding the measures of constraint taken against Villa Vigoni, on which point the Respondent indicates to the Court that it would have no objection to the latter ordering it to bring the said measures to an end.

In its Counter-Memorial, Italy submitted a counter-claim "with respect to the question of the reparation owed to Italian victims of grave violations of international humanitarian law committed by forces of the German Reich"; this claim was dismissed by the Court's Order of 6 July 2010, on the grounds that it did not fall within the jurisdiction of the Court and was consequently inadmissible under Article 80, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Court (see paragraph 5 above).

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39. The subject-matter of a dispute brought before the Court is delimited by the claims submitted to it by the parties. In the present case, since there is no longer any counter-claim before the Court and Italy has requested the Court to "adjudge Germany's claims to be unfounded", it is those claims that delimit the subject-matter of the dispute which the Court is called upon to settle. It is in respect of those claims that the Court must determine whether it has jurisdiction to entertain the case.

40. Italy has raised no objection of any kind regarding the jurisdiction of the Court or the admissibility of the Application.

Nevertheless, according to well-established jurisprudence, the Court "must . . . always be satisfied that it has jurisdiction, and must if necessary go into the matter *proprio motu*" (*Appeal relating to the Jurisdiction of the ICAO Council (India* v. *Pakistan), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1972*, p. 52, para. 13).

41. Germany's Application was filed on the basis of the jurisdiction conferred on the Court by Article 1 of the European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, under the terms of which:

> "The High Contracting Parties shall submit to the judgement of the International Court of Justice all international legal disputes which may arise between them including, in particular, those concerning:
>
> *(a)* the interpretation of a treaty;
> *(b)* any question of international law;
> *(c)* the existence of any fact which, if established, would constitute a breach of an international obligation;
> *(d)* the nature or extent of the reparation to be made for the breach of an international obligation."

42. Article 27, subparagraph *(a)*, of the same Convention limits the scope of that instrument *ratione temporis* by stating that it shall not apply to "disputes relating to facts or situations prior to the entry into force of this Convention as between the parties to the dispute". The Convention entered into force as between Germany and Italy on 18 April 1961.

43. The claims submitted to the Court by Germany certainly relate to "international legal disputes" within the meaning of Article 1 as cited above, between two States which, as has just been said, were both parties to the Convention on the date when the Application was filed, and indeed continue to be so.

44. The clause in the above-mentioned Article 27 imposing a limitation *ratione temporis* is not applicable to Germany's claims: the dispute which those claims concern does not "relat[e] to facts or situations prior to the entry into force of th[e] Convention as between the parties to the dispute", i.e., prior to 18 April 1961. The "facts or situations" which have given rise to the dispute before the Court are constituted by Italian judicial decisions that denied Germany the jurisdictional immunity which it claimed, and by measures of constraint applied to property belonging to Germany. Those decisions and measures were adopted between 2004 and 2011, thus well after the European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes entered into force as between the Parties. It is true that the subject-matter of the disputes to which the judicial proceedings in question relate is reparation for the injury caused by actions of the German armed forces in 1943-1945. Germany's complaint before the Court, however, is not about the treatment of that subject-matter in the judgments of the Italian courts; its complaint is solely that its immunities from jurisdiction and enforcement have been violated. Defined in such

terms, the dispute undoubtedly relates to "facts or situations" occurring entirely after the entry into force of the Convention as between the Parties. Italy has thus rightly not sought to argue that the dispute brought before the Court by Germany falls wholly or partly within the limitation *ratione temporis* under the above-mentioned Article 27. The Court has jurisdiction to deal with the dispute.

45. The Parties, who have not disagreed on the analysis set out above, have on the other hand debated the extent of the Court's jurisdiction in a quite different context, that of some of the arguments put forward by Italy in its defence and relating to the alleged non-performance by Germany of its obligation to make reparation to the Italian and Greek victims of the crimes committed by the German Reich in 1943-1945.

According to Italy, a link exists between the question of Germany's performance of its obligation to make reparation to the victims and that of the jurisdictional immunity which Germany might rely on before the foreign courts to which those victims apply, in the sense that a State which fails to perform its obligation to make reparation to the victims of grave violations of international humanitarian law, and which offers those victims no effective means of claiming the reparation to which they may be entitled, would be deprived of the right to invoke its jurisdictional immunity before the courts of the State of the victims' nationality.

46. Germany has contended that the Court could not rule on such an argument, on the basis that it concerned the question of reparation claims, which relate to facts prior to 18 April 1961. According to Germany, "facts occurring before the date of the entry into force of the European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes as between Italy and Germany clearly lie outside the jurisdiction of the Court", and "reparation claims do not fall within the subject-matter of the present dispute and do not form part of the present proceedings". Germany relies in this respect on the Order whereby the Court dismissed Italy's counter-claim, which precisely asked the Court to find that Germany had violated its obligation of reparation owed to Italian victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the German Reich (see paragraph 38). Germany points out that this dismissal was based on the fact that the said counter-claim fell outside the jurisdiction of the Court, because of the clause imposing a limitation *ratione temporis* in the above-mentioned Article 27 of the European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, the question of reparation claims resulting directly from the acts committed in 1943-1945.

47. Italy has responded to this objection that, while the Order of 6 July 2010 certainly prevents it from pursuing its counter-claim in the present case, it does not on the other hand prevent it from using the arguments on which it based that counter-claim in its defence against Germany's

claims; that the question of the lack of appropriate reparation is, in its view, crucial for resolving the dispute over immunity; and that the Court's jurisdiction to take cognizance of it incidentally is thus indisputable.

48. The Court notes that, since the dismissal of Italy's counter-claim, it no longer has before it any submissions asking it to rule on the question of whether Germany has a duty of reparation towards the Italian victims of the crimes committed by the German Reich and whether it has complied with that obligation in respect of all those victims, or only some of them. The Court is therefore not called upon to rule on those questions.

49. However, in support of its submission that it has not violated Germany's jurisdictional immunity, Italy contends that Germany stands deprived of the right to invoke that immunity in Italian courts before which civil actions have been brought by some of the victims, because of the fact that it has not fully complied with its duty of reparation.

50. The Court must determine whether, as Italy maintains, the failure of a State to perform completely a duty of reparation which it allegedly bears is capable of having an effect, in law, on the existence and scope of that State's jurisdictional immunity before foreign courts. This question is one of law on which the Court must rule in order to determine the customary international law applicable in respect of State immunity for the purposes of the present case.

Should the preceding question be answered in the affirmative, the second question would be whether, in the specific circumstances of the case, taking account in particular of Germany's conduct on the issue of reparation, the Italian courts had sufficient grounds for setting aside Germany's immunity. It is not necessary for the Court to satisfy itself that it has jurisdiction to respond to this second question until it has responded to the first.

The Court considers that, at this stage, no other question arises with regard to the existence or scope of its jurisdiction.

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51. The Court will first address the issues raised by Germany's first submission, namely whether, by exercising jurisdiction over Germany with regard to the claims brought before them by the various Italian claimants, the Italian courts acted in breach of Italy's obligation to accord jurisdictional immunity to Germany. It will then turn, in Section IV, to the measures of constraint adopted in respect of Villa Vigoni and, in Section V, to the decisions of the Italian courts declaring enforceable in Italy the judgments of the Greek courts.

III. Alleged Violation of Germany's Jurisdictional Immunity in the Proceedings Brought by the Italian Claimants

1. The Issues before the Court

52. The Court begins by observing that the proceedings in the Italian courts have their origins in acts perpetrated by German armed forces and other organs of the German Reich. Germany has fully acknowledged the "untold suffering inflicted on Italian men and women in particular during massacres, and on former Italian military internees" (Joint Declaration of Germany and Italy, Trieste, 18 November 2008), accepts that these acts were unlawful and stated before this Court that it "is fully aware of [its] responsibility in this regard". The Court considers that the acts in question can only be described as displaying a complete disregard for the "elementary considerations of humanity" (*Corfu Channel (United Kingdom* v. *Albania), Merits, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1949*, p. 22; *Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua* v. *United States of America), Merits, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1986*, p. 112). One category of cases involved the large-scale killing of civilians in occupied territory as part of a policy of reprisals, exemplified by the massacres committed on 29 June 1944 in Civitella (Val di Chiana), Cornia and San Pancrazio by members of the "Hermann Göring" division of the German armed forces involving the killing of 203 civilians taken as hostages after resistance fighters had killed four German soldiers a few days earlier (*Max Josef Milde* case, Military Court of La Spezia, judgment of 10 October 2006 (registered on 2 February 2007)). Another category involved members of the civilian population who, like Mr. Luigi Ferrini, were deported from Italy to what was in substance slave labour in Germany. The third concerned members of the Italian armed forces who were denied the status of prisoner of war, together with the protections which that status entailed, to which they were entitled and who were similarly used as forced labourers. The Court considers that there can be no doubt that this conduct was a serious violation of the international law of armed conflict applicable in 1943-1945. Article 6 *(b)* of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal, 8 August 1945 (United Nations, *Treaty Series (UNTS)*, Vol. 82, p. 279), convened at Nuremberg included as war crimes "murder, ill-treatment, or deportation to slave labour or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory", as well as "murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war". The list of crimes against humanity in Article 6 *(c)* of the Charter included "murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war". The murder of civilian hostages in Italy was one of the counts on which a number of war crimes defendants were condemned in trials immediately after the Second World War (e.g., *Von Mackensen and Maelzer* (1946), *Annual Digest*, Vol. 13, p. 258; *Kesselring* (1947), *Annual Digest*, Vol. 13, p. 260; and

Kappler (1948), *Annual Digest*, Vol. 15, p. 471). The principles of the Nuremberg Charter were confirmed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in resolution 95 (I) of 11 December 1946.

53. However, the Court is not called upon to decide whether these acts were illegal, a point which is not contested. The question for the Court is whether or not, in proceedings regarding claims for compensation arising out of those acts, the Italian courts were obliged to accord Germany immunity. In that context, the Court notes that there is a considerable measure of agreement between the Parties regarding the applicable law. In particular, both Parties agree that immunity is governed by international law and is not a mere matter of comity.

54. As between Germany and Italy, any entitlement to immunity can be derived only from customary international law, rather than treaty. Although Germany is one of the eight States parties to the European Convention on State Immunity of 16 May 1972 (Council of Europe*, European Treaty Series (ETS)*, No. 74; *UNTS*, Vol. 1495, p. 182) (hereinafter the "European Convention"), Italy is not a party and the Convention is accordingly not binding upon it. Neither State is party to the United Nations Convention on Jurisdictional Immunities of States and Their Property, adopted on 2 December 2004 (hereinafter the "United Nations Convention"), which is not yet in force in any event. As of 1 February 2012, the United Nations Convention had been signed by twenty-eight States and obtained thirteen instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. Article 30 of the Convention provides that it will enter into force on the thirtieth day after deposit of the thirtieth such instrument. Neither Germany nor Italy has signed the Convention.

55. It follows that the Court must determine, in accordance with Article 38 (1) *(b)* of its Statute, the existence of "international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law" conferring immunity on States and, if so, what is the scope and extent of that immunity. To do so, it must apply the criteria which it has repeatedly laid down for identifying a rule of customary international law. In particular, as the Court made clear in the *North Sea Continental Shelf* cases, the existence of a rule of customary international law requires that there be "a settled practice" together with *opinio juris* (*North Sea Continental Shelf (Federal Republic of Germany/Denmark; Federal Republic of Germany/Netherlands), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1969*, p. 44, para. 77). Moreover, as the Court has also observed,

> "[i]t is of course axiomatic that the material of customary international law is to be looked for primarily in the actual practice and *opinio juris*

> of States, even though multilateral conventions may have an important role to play in recording and defining rules deriving from custom, or indeed in developing them" (*Continental Shelf (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya/Malta), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1985*, pp. 29-30, para. 27).

In the present context, State practice of particular significance is to be found in the judgments of national courts faced with the question whether a foreign State is immune, the legislation of those States which have enacted statutes dealing with immunity, the claims to immunity advanced by States before foreign courts and the statements made by States, first in the course of the extensive study of the subject by the International Law Commission and then in the context of the adoption of the United Nations Convention. *Opinio juris* in this context is reflected in particular in the assertion by States claiming immunity that international law accords them a right to such immunity from the jurisdiction of other States; in the acknowledgment, by States granting immunity, that international law imposes upon them an obligation to do so; and, conversely, in the assertion by States in other cases of a right to exercise jurisdiction over foreign States. While it may be true that States sometimes decide to accord an immunity more extensive than that required by international law, for present purposes, the point is that the grant of immunity in such a case is not accompanied by the requisite *opinio juris* and therefore sheds no light upon the issue currently under consideration by the Court.

56. Although there has been much debate regarding the origins of State immunity and the identification of the principles underlying that immunity in the past, the International Law Commission concluded in 1980 that the rule of State immunity had been "adopted as a general rule of customary international law solidly rooted in the current practice of States" (*Yearbook of the International Law Commission*, 1980, Vol. II (2), p. 147, para. 26). That conclusion was based upon an extensive survey of State practice and, in the opinion of the Court, is confirmed by the record of national legislation, judicial decisions, assertions of a right to immunity and the comments of States on what became the United Nations Convention. That practice shows that, whether in claiming immunity for themselves or according it to others, States generally proceed on the basis that there is a right to immunity under international law, together with a corresponding obligation on the part of other States to respect and give effect to that immunity.

57. The Court considers that the rule of State immunity occupies an important place in international law and international relations. It derives from the principle of sovereign equality of States, which, as Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations makes clear, is one of the fundamental principles of the international legal order. This principle has to be viewed together with the principle that each State possesses sov-

ereignty over its own territory and that there flows from that sovereignty the jurisdiction of the State over events and persons within that territory. Exceptions to the immunity of the State represent a departure from the principle of sovereign equality. Immunity may represent a departure from the principle of territorial sovereignty and the jurisdiction which flows from it.

58. The Parties are thus in broad agreement regarding the validity and importance of State immunity as a part of customary international law. They differ, however, as to whether (as Germany contends) the law to be applied is that which determined the scope and extent of State immunity in 1943-1945, i.e., at the time that the events giving rise to the proceedings in the Italian courts took place, or (as Italy maintains) that which applied at the time the proceedings themselves occurred. The Court observes that, in accordance with the principle stated in Article 13 of the International Law Commission Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, the compatibility of an act with international law can be determined only by reference to the law in force at the time when the act occurred. In that context, it is important to distinguish between the relevant acts of Germany and those of Italy. The relevant German acts — which are described in paragraph 52 — occurred in 1943-1945, and it is, therefore, the international law of that time which is applicable to them. The relevant Italian acts — the denial of immunity and exercise of jurisdiction by the Italian courts — did not occur until the proceedings in the Italian courts took place. Since the claim before the Court concerns the actions of the Italian courts, it is the international law in force at the time of those proceedings which the Court has to apply. Moreover, as the Court has stated (in the context of the personal immunities accorded by international law to foreign ministers), the law of immunity is essentially procedural in nature (*Arrest Warrant of 1 April 2000 (Democratic Republic of the Congo* v. *Belgium), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2002*, p. 25, para. 60). It regulates the exercise of jurisdiction in respect of particular conduct and is thus entirely distinct from the substantive law which determines whether that conduct is lawful or unlawful. For these reasons, the Court considers that it must examine and apply the law on State immunity as it existed at the time of the Italian proceedings, rather than that which existed in 1943-1945.

59. The Parties also differ as to the scope and extent of the rule of State immunity. In that context, the Court notes that many States (including both Germany and Italy) now distinguish between *acta jure gestionis*, in respect of which they have limited the immunity which they claim for themselves and which they accord to others, and *acta jure imperii*. That approach has also been followed in the United Nations Convention and the European Convention (see also the draft Inter-American Convention on Jurisdictional Immunity of States drawn up by the Inter-American

Juridical Committee of the Organization of American States in 1983 (*ILM*, Vol. 22, p. 292)).

60. The Court is not called upon to address the question of how international law treats the issue of State immunity in respect of *acta jure gestionis*. The acts of the German armed forces and other State organs which were the subject of the proceedings in the Italian courts clearly constituted *acta jure imperii*. The Court notes that Italy, in response to a question posed by a Member of the Court, recognized that those acts had to be characterized as *acta jure imperii*, notwithstanding that they were unlawful. The Court considers that the terms *"jure imperii"* and *"jure gestionis"* do not imply that the acts in question are lawful but refer rather to whether the acts in question fall to be assessed by reference to the law governing the exercise of sovereign power *(jus imperii)* or the law concerning non-sovereign activities of a State, especially private and commercial activities *(jus gestionis)*. To the extent that this distinction is significant for determining whether or not a State is entitled to immunity from the jurisdiction of another State's courts in respect of a particular act, it has to be applied before that jurisdiction can be exercised, whereas the legality or illegality of the act is something which can be determined only in the exercise of that jurisdiction. Although the present case is unusual in that the illegality of the acts at issue has been admitted by Germany at all stages of the proceedings, the Court considers that this fact does not alter the characterization of those acts as *acta jure imperii*.

61. Both Parties agree that States are generally entitled to immunity in respect of *acta jure imperii*. That is the approach taken in the United Nations, European and draft Inter-American Conventions, the national legislation in those States which have adopted statutes on the subject and the jurisprudence of national courts. It is against that background that the Court must approach the question raised by the present proceedings, namely whether that immunity is applicable to acts committed by the armed forces of a State (and other organs of that State acting in co-operation with the armed forces) in the course of conducting an armed conflict. Germany maintains that immunity is applicable and that there is no relevant limitation on the immunity to which a State is entitled in respect of *acta jure imperii*. Italy, in its pleadings before the Court, maintains that Germany is not entitled to immunity in respect of the cases before the Italian courts for two reasons: first, that immunity as to *acta jure imperii* does not extend to torts or delicts occasioning death, personal injury or damage to property committed on the territory of the forum State, and, secondly, that, irrespective of where the relevant acts took place, Germany was not entitled to immunity because those acts involved the most serious violations of rules of international law of a peremptory character for which no alternative means of redress was available. The Court will consider each of Italy's arguments in turn.

2. Italy's First Argument: The Territorial Tort Principle

62. The essence of the first Italian argument is that customary international law has developed to the point where a State is no longer entitled to immunity in respect of acts occasioning death, personal injury or damage to property on the territory of the forum State, even if the act in question was performed *jure imperii*. Italy recognizes that this argument is applicable only to those of the claims brought before the Italian courts which concern acts that occurred in Italy and not to the cases of Italian military internees taken prisoner outside Italy and transferred to Germany or other territories outside Italy as forced labour. In support of its argument, Italy points to the adoption of Article 11 of the European Convention and Article 12 of the United Nations Convention and to the fact that nine of the ten States it identified which have adopted legislation specifically dealing with State immunity (the exception being Pakistan) have enacted provisions similar to those in the two Conventions. Italy acknowledges that the European Convention contains a provision to the effect that the Convention is not applicable to the acts of foreign armed forces (Art. 31) but maintains that this provision is merely a saving clause aimed primarily at avoiding conflicts between the Convention and instruments regulating the status of visiting forces present with the consent of the territorial sovereign and that it does not show that States are entitled to immunity in respect of the acts of their armed forces in another State. Italy dismisses the significance of certain statements (discussed in paragraph 69 below) made during the process of adoption of the United Nations Convention suggesting that that Convention did not apply to the acts of armed forces. Italy also notes that two of the national statutes (those of the United Kingdom and Singapore) are not applicable to the acts of foreign armed forces but argues that the other seven (those of Argentina, Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, South Africa and the United States of America) amount to significant State practice asserting jurisdiction over torts occasioned by foreign armed forces.

63. Germany maintains that, in so far as they deny a State immunity in respect of *acta jure imperii*, neither Article 11 of the European Convention, nor Article 12 of the United Nations Convention reflects customary international law. It contends that, in any event, they are irrelevant to the present proceedings, because neither provision was intended to apply to the acts of armed forces. Germany also points to the fact that, with the exception of the Italian cases and the *Distomo* case in Greece, no national court has ever held that a State was not entitled to immunity in respect of acts of its armed forces, in the context of an armed conflict and that, by

contrast, the courts in several States have expressly declined jurisdiction in such cases on the ground that the respondent State was entitled to immunity.

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64. The Court begins by observing that the notion that State immunity does not extend to civil proceedings in respect of acts committed on the territory of the forum State causing death, personal injury or damage to property originated in cases concerning road traffic accidents and other "insurable risks". The limitation of immunity recognized by some national courts in such cases was treated as confined to *acta jure gestionis* (see, e.g., the judgment of the Supreme Court of Austria in *Holubek* v. *Government of the United States of America* (*Juristische Blätter* (Vienna), Vol. 84, 1962, p. 43; *ILR*, Vol. 40, p. 73)). The Court notes, however, that none of the national legislation which provides for a "territorial tort exception" to immunity expressly distinguishes between *acta jure gestionis* and *acta jure imperii*. The Supreme Court of Canada expressly rejected the suggestion that the exception in the Canadian legislation was subject to such a distinction (*Schreiber* v. *Federal Republic of Germany and the Attorney General of Canada*, [2002] *Supreme Court Reports (SCR)*, Vol. 3, p. 269, paras. 33-36). Nor is such a distinction featured in either Article 11 of the European Convention or Article 12 of the United Nations Convention. The International Law Commission's commentary on the text of what became Article 12 of the United Nations Convention makes clear that this was a deliberate choice and that the provision was not intended to be restricted to *acta jure gestionis* (*Yearbook of the International Law Commission*, 1991, Vol. II (2), p. 45, para. 8). Germany has not, however, been alone in suggesting that, in so far as it was intended to apply to *acta jure imperii*, Article 12 was not representative of customary international law. In criticizing the International Law Commission's draft of what became Article 12, China commented in 1990 that "the article had gone even further than the restrictive doctrine, for it made no distinction between sovereign acts and private law acts" (United Nations doc. A/C.6/45/SR.25, p. 2) and the United States, commenting in 2004 on the draft United Nations Convention, stated that Article 12 "must be interpreted and applied consistently with the time-honoured distinction between acts *jure imperii* and acts *jure gestionis*" since to extend jurisdiction without regard to that distinction "would be contrary to the existing principles of international law" (United Nations doc. A/C.6/59/SR.13, p. 10, para. 63).

65. The Court considers that it is not called upon in the present proceedings to resolve the question whether there is in customary interna-

tional law a "tort exception" to State immunity applicable to *acta jure imperii* in general. The issue before the Court is confined to acts committed on the territory of the forum State by the armed forces of a foreign State, and other organs of State working in co-operation with those armed forces, in the course of conducting an armed conflict.

66. The Court will first consider whether the adoption of Article 11 of the European Convention or Article 12 of the United Nations Convention affords any support to Italy's contention that States are no longer entitled to immunity in respect of the type of acts specified in the preceding paragraph. As the Court has already explained (see paragraph 54 above), neither Convention is in force between the Parties to the present case. The provisions of these Conventions are, therefore, relevant only in so far as their provisions and the process of their adoption and implementation shed light on the content of customary international law.

67. Article 11 of the European Convention states the territorial tort principle in broad terms,

> "A Contracting State cannot claim immunity from the jurisdiction of a court of another Contracting State in proceedings which relate to redress for injury to the person or damage to tangible property, if the facts which occasioned the injury or damage occurred in the territory of the State of the forum, and if the author of the injury or damage was present in that territory at the time when those facts occurred."

That provision must, however, be read in the light of Article 31, which provides,

> "Nothing in this Convention shall affect any immunities or privileges enjoyed by a Contracting State in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by, or in relation to, its armed forces when on the territory of another Contracting State."

Although one of the concerns which Article 31 was intended to address was the relationship between the Convention and the various agreements on the status of visiting forces, the language of Article 31 makes clear that it is not confined to that matter and excludes from the scope of the Convention all proceedings relating to acts of foreign armed forces, irrespective of whether those forces are present in the territory of the forum with the consent of the forum State and whether their acts take place in peacetime or in conditions of armed conflict. The Explanatory Report on the Convention, which contains a detailed commentary prepared as part of the negotiating process, states in respect of Article 31,

> "The Convention is not intended to govern situations which may arise in the event of armed conflict; *nor* can it be invoked to resolve

problems which may arise between allied States as a result of the stationing of forces. These problems are generally dealt with by special agreements (cf. Art. 33).

. . . . . .

[Article 31] prevents the Convention being interpreted as having any influence upon these matters." (Para. 116; emphasis added.)

68. The Court agrees with Italy that Article 31 takes effect as a "saving clause", with the result that the immunity of a State for the acts of its armed forces falls entirely outside the Convention and has to be determined by reference to customary international law. The consequence, however, is that the inclusion of the "territorial tort principle" in Article 11 of the Convention cannot be treated as support for the argument that a State is not entitled to immunity for torts committed by its armed forces. As the Explanatory Report states, the effect of Article 31 is that the Convention has no influence upon that question. Courts in Belgium (judgment of the Court of First Instance of Ghent in *Botelberghe* v. *German State*, 18 February 2000), Ireland (judgment of the Supreme Court in *McElhinney* v. *Williams*, 15 December 1995, [1995] 3 *Irish Reports* 382; *ILR*, Vol. 104, p. 691), Slovenia (case No. Up-13/99, Constitutional Court, para. 13), Greece (*Margellos* v. *Federal Republic of Germany*, case No. 6/2002, *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 529) and Poland (judgment of the Supreme Court of Poland, *Natoniewski* v. *Federal Republic of Germany, Polish Yearbook of International Law*, Vol. XXX, 2010, p. 299) have concluded that Article 31 means that the immunity of a State for torts committed by its armed forces is unaffected by Article 11 of the Convention.

69. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention provides,

"Unless otherwise agreed between the States concerned, a State cannot invoke immunity from jurisdiction before a court of another State which is otherwise competent in a proceeding which relates to pecuniary compensation for death or injury to the person, or damage to or loss of tangible property, caused by an act or omission which is alleged to be attributable to the State, if the act or omission occurred in whole or in part in the territory of that other State and if the author of the act or omission was present in that territory at the time of the act or omission."

Unlike the European Convention, the United Nations Convention contains no express provision excluding the acts of armed forces from its scope. However, the International Law Commission's commentary on the text of Article 12 states that that provision does not apply to "situations involving armed conflicts" (*Yearbook of the International Law Commis-*

sion, 1991, Vol. II (2), p. 46, para. 10). Moreover, in presenting to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly the Report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Jurisdictional Immunities of States and Their Property (United Nations doc. A/59/22), the Chairman of the *Ad Hoc* Committee stated that the draft Convention had been prepared on the basis of a general understanding that military activities were not covered (United Nations doc. A/C.6/59/SR.13, p. 6, para. 36).

No State questioned this interpretation. Moreover, the Court notes that two of the States which have so far ratified the Convention, Norway and Sweden, made declarations in identical terms stating their understanding that "the Convention does not apply to military activities, including the activities of armed forces during an armed conflict, as those terms are understood under international humanitarian law, and activities undertaken by military forces of a State in the exercise of their official duties" (United Nations doc. C.N.280.2006.TREATIES-2 and United Nations doc. C.N.912.2009.TREATIES-1). In the light of these various statements, the Court concludes that the inclusion in the Convention of Article 12 cannot be taken as affording any support to the contention that customary international law denies State immunity in tort proceedings relating to acts occasioning death, personal injury or damage to property committed in the territory of the forum State by the armed forces and associated organs of another State in the context of an armed conflict.

70. Turning to State practice in the form of national legislation, the Court notes that nine of the ten States referred to by the Parties which have legislated specifically for the subject of State immunity have adopted provisions to the effect that a State is not entitled to immunity in respect of torts occasioning death, personal injury or damage to property occurring on the territory of the forum State (United States of America Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act 1976, 28 *USC*, Sect. 1605 *(a)* (5); United Kingdom State Immunity Act 1978, Sect. 5; South Africa Foreign States Immunities Act 1981, Sect. 6; Canada State Immunity Act 1985, Sect. 6; Australia Foreign States Immunities Act 1985, Sect. 13; Singapore State Immunity Act 1985, Sect. 7; Argentina Law No. 24.488 (Statute on the Immunity of Foreign States before Argentine Tribunals) 1995, Art. 2 *(e)*; Israel Foreign State Immunity Law 2008, Sect. 5; and Japan, Act on the Civil Jurisdiction of Japan with respect to a Foreign State, 2009, Art. 10). Only Pakistan's State Immunity Ordinance 1981 contains no comparable provision.

71. Two of these statutes (the United Kingdom State Immunity Act 1978, Section 16 (2) and the Singapore State Immunity Act 1985, Sec-

tion 19 (2) *(a)*) contain provisions that exclude proceedings relating to the acts of foreign armed forces from their application. The corresponding provisions in the Canadian, Australian and Israeli statutes exclude only the acts of visiting forces present with the consent of the host State or matters covered by legislation regarding such visiting forces (Canada State Immunity Act 1985, Section 16; Australia Foreign States Immunities Act 1985, Section 6; Israel Foreign State Immunity Law 2008, Section 22). The legislation of South Africa, Argentina and Japan contains no exclusion clause. However, the Japanese statute (in Article 3) states that its provisions "shall not affect the privileges or immunities enjoyed by a foreign State . . . based on treaties or the established international law".

The United States Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act 1976 contains no provision specifically addressing claims relating to the acts of foreign armed forces but its provision that there is no immunity in respect of claims "in which money damages are sought against a foreign State for personal injury or death, or damage to or loss of property, occurring in the United States and caused by the tortious act or omission of that foreign State" (Sec. 1605 *(a)* (5)) is subject to an exception for "any claim based upon the exercise or performance or the failure to exercise or perform a discretionary function regardless of whether the discretion be abused" (Sec. 1605 *(a)* (5) (A)). Interpreting this provision, which has no counterpart in the legislation of other States, a court in the United States has held that a foreign State whose agents committed an assassination in the United States was not entitled to immunity (*Letelier* v. *Republic of Chile* (1980), *Federal Supplement (F. Supp.)*, Vol. 488, p. 665; *ILR*, Vol. 63, p. 378 (United States District Court, District of Columbia)). However, the Court is not aware of any case in the United States where the courts have been called upon to apply this provision to acts performed by the armed forces and associated organs of foreign States in the course of an armed conflict.

Indeed, in none of the seven States in which the legislation contains no general exclusion for the acts of armed forces, have the courts been called upon to apply that legislation in a case involving the armed forces of a foreign State, and associated organs of State, acting in the context of an armed conflict.

72. The Court next turns to State practice in the form of the judgments of national courts regarding State immunity in relation to the acts of armed forces. The question whether a State is entitled to immunity in proceedings concerning torts allegedly committed by its armed forces when stationed on or visiting the territory of another State, with the consent of the latter, has been considered by national courts on a number of occasions. Decisions of the courts of Egypt (*Bassionni Amrane* v. *John*, *Gazette des Tribunaux mixtes d'Egypte*, January 1934, p. 108; *Annual Digest*, Vol. 7, p. 187), Belgium (*S.A. Eau, gaz, électricité et applications* v.

Office d'aide mutuelle, *Cour d'appel*, Brussels, *Pasicrisie belge*, 1957, Vol. 144, 2nd Part, p. 88; *ILR*, Vol. 23, p. 205) and Germany (*Immunity of the United Kingdom*, Court of Appeal of Schleswig, *Jahrbuch für Internationales Recht*, 1957, Vol. 7, p. 400; *ILR*, Vol. 24, p. 207) are earlier examples of national courts according immunity where the acts of foreign armed forces were characterized as *acta jure imperii*. Since then, several national courts have held that a State is immune with respect to damage caused by warships (*United States of America* v. *Eemshaven Port Authority*, Supreme Court of the Netherlands, *Nederlandse Jurisprudentie*, 2001, No. 567; *ILR*, Vol. 127, p. 225; *Allianz Via Insurance* v. *United States of America* (1999), *Cour d'appel*, Aix-en-Provence, 2nd Chamber, judgment of 3 September 1999, *ILR*, Vol. 127, p. 148) or military exercises (*FILT-CGIL Trento* v. *United States of America*, Italian Court of Cassation, *Rivista di diritto internazionale*, Vol. 83, 2000, p. 1155; *ILR*, Vol. 128, p. 644). The United Kingdom courts have held that customary international law required immunity in proceedings for torts committed by foreign armed forces on United Kingdom territory if the acts in question were *acta jure imperii* (*Littrell* v. *United States of America (No. 2)*, Court of Appeal, [1995] 1 *Weekly Law Reports (WLR)* 82; *ILR*, Vol. 100, p. 438; *Holland* v. *Lampen-Wolfe*, House of Lords, [2000] 1 *WLR* 1573; *ILR*, Vol. 119, p. 367).

The Supreme Court of Ireland held that international law required that a foreign State be accorded immunity in respect of acts *jure imperii* carried out by members of its armed forces even when on the territory of the forum State without the forum State's permission (*McElhinney* v. *Williams*, [1995] 3 *Irish Reports* 382; *ILR*, Vol. 104, p. 691). The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights later held that this decision reflected a widely held view of international law so that the grant of immunity could not be regarded as incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (*McElhinney* v. *Ireland* [GC], application No. 31253/96, judgment of 21 November 2001, *ECHR Reports* 2001-XI, p. 39; *ILR*, Vol. 123, p. 73, para. 38).

While not directly concerned with the specific issue which arises in the present case, these judicial decisions, which do not appear to have been contradicted in any other national court judgments, suggest that a State is entitled to immunity in respect of *acta jure imperii* committed by its armed forces on the territory of another State.

73. The Court considers, however, that for the purposes of the present case the most pertinent State practice is to be found in those national judicial decisions which concerned the question whether a State was entitled to immunity in proceedings concerning acts allegedly committed by its armed forces in the course of an armed conflict. All of those cases, the facts of which are often very similar to those of the cases before the

Italian courts, concern the events of the Second World War. In this context, the *Cour de cassation* in France has consistently held that Germany was entitled to immunity in a series of cases brought by claimants who had been deported from occupied French territory during the Second World War (No. 02-45961, 16 December 2003, *Bull. civ.*, 2003, I, No. 258, p. 206 (the *Bucheron* case); No. 03-41851, 2 June 2004, *Bull. civ.*, 2004, I, No. 158, p. 132 (the *X* case) and No. 04-47504, 3 January 2006 (the *Grosz* case)). The Court also notes that the European Court of Human Rights held in *Grosz* v. *France* (application No. 14717/06, decision of 16 June 2009) that France had not contravened the European Convention on Human Rights in the proceedings which were the subject of the 2006 *Cour de cassation* judgment (judgment No. 04-47504), because the *Cour de cassation* had given effect to an immunity required by international law.

74. The highest courts in Slovenia and Poland have also held that Germany was entitled to immunity in respect of unlawful acts perpetrated on their territory by its armed forces during the Second World War. In 2001 the Constitutional Court of Slovenia ruled that Germany was entitled to immunity in an action brought by a claimant who had been deported to Germany during the German occupation and that the Supreme Court of Slovenia had not acted arbitrarily in upholding that immunity (case No. Up-13/99, judgment of 8 March 2001). The Supreme Court of Poland held, in *Natoniewski* v. *Federal Republic of Germany* (judgment of 29 October 2010, *Polish Yearbook of International Law*, Vol. XXX, 2010, p. 299), that Germany was entitled to immunity in an action brought by a claimant who in 1944 had suffered injuries when German forces burned his village in occupied Poland and murdered several hundred of its inhabitants. The Supreme Court, after an extensive review of the decisions in *Ferrini*, *Distomo* and *Margellos*, as well as the provisions of the European Convention and the United Nations Convention and a range of other materials, concluded that States remained entitled to immunity in respect of torts allegedly committed by their armed forces in the course of an armed conflict. Judgments by lower courts in Belgium (judgment of the Court of First Instance of Ghent in 2000 in *Botelberghe* v. *German State*), Serbia (judgment of the Court of First Instance of Leskovac, 1 November 2001) and Brazil (*Barreto* v. *Federal Republic of Germany*, Federal Court, Rio de Janeiro, judgment of 9 July 2008 holding Germany immune in proceedings regarding the sinking of a Brazilian fishing vessel by a German submarine in Brazilian waters) have also held that Germany was immune in actions for acts of war committed on their territory or in their waters.

75. Finally, the Court notes that the German courts have also concluded that the territorial tort principle did not remove a State's entitle-

ment to immunity under international law in respect of acts committed by its armed forces, even where those acts took place on the territory of the forum State (judgment of the Federal Supreme Court of 26 June 2003 (*Greek Citizens* v. *Federal Republic of Germany*, case No. III ZR 245/98, *NJW*, 2003, p. 3488; *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 556), declining to give effect in Germany to the Greek judgment in the *Distomo* case on the ground that it had been given in breach of Germany's entitlement to immunity).

76. The only State in which there is any judicial practice which appears to support the Italian argument, apart from the judgments of the Italian courts which are the subject of the present proceedings, is Greece. The judgment of the Hellenic Supreme Court in the *Distomo* case in 2000 contains an extensive discussion of the territorial tort principle without any suggestion that it does not extend to the acts of armed forces during an armed conflict. However, the Greek Special Supreme Court, in its judgment in *Margellos* v. *Federal Republic of Germany* (case No. 6/2002, *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 525), repudiated the reasoning of the Supreme Court in *Distomo* and held that Germany was entitled to immunity. In particular, the Special Supreme Court held that the territorial tort principle was not applicable to the acts of the armed forces of a State in the conduct of armed conflict. While that judgment does not alter the outcome in the *Distomo* case, a matter considered below, Greece has informed the Court that courts and other bodies in Greece faced with the same issue of whether immunity is applicable to torts allegedly committed by foreign armed forces in Greece are required to follow the stance taken by the Special Supreme Court in its decision in *Margellos* unless they consider that customary international law has changed since the *Margellos* judgment. Germany has pointed out that, since the judgment in *Margellos* was given, no Greek court has denied immunity in proceedings brought against Germany in respect of torts allegedly committed by German armed forces during the Second World War and in a 2009 decision (decision No. 853/2009), the Supreme Court, although deciding the case on a different ground, approved the reasoning in *Margellos*. In view of the judgment in *Margellos* and the dictum in the 2009 case, as well as the decision of the Greek Government not to permit enforcement of the *Distomo* judgment in Greece itself and the Government's defence of that decision before the European Court of Human Rights in *Kalogeropoulou and Others* v. *Greece and Germany* (application No. 59021/00, decision of 12 December 2002, *ECHR Reports* 2002-X, p. 417; *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 537), the Court concludes that Greek State practice taken as a whole actually contradicts, rather than supports, Italy's argument.

77. In the Court's opinion, State practice in the form of judicial decisions supports the proposition that State immunity for *acta jure imperii*

continues to extend to civil proceedings for acts occasioning death, personal injury or damage to property committed by the armed forces and other organs of a State in the conduct of armed conflict, even if the relevant acts take place on the territory of the forum State. That practice is accompanied by *opinio juris*, as demonstrated by the positions taken by States and the jurisprudence of a number of national courts which have made clear that they considered that customary international law required immunity. The almost complete absence of contrary jurisprudence is also significant, as is the absence of any statements by States in connection with the work of the International Law Commission regarding State immunity and the adoption of the United Nations Convention or, so far as the Court has been able to discover, in any other context asserting that customary international law does not require immunity in such cases.

78. In light of the foregoing, the Court considers that customary international law continues to require that a State be accorded immunity in proceedings for torts allegedly committed on the territory of another State by its armed forces and other organs of State in the course of conducting an armed conflict. That conclusion is confirmed by the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights to which the Court has referred (see paragraphs 72, 73 and 76).

79. The Court therefore concludes that, contrary to what had been argued by Italy in the present proceedings, the decision of the Italian courts to deny immunity to Germany cannot be justified on the basis of the territorial tort principle.

3. Italy's Second Argument: The Subject-Matter and Circumstances of the Claims in the Italian Courts

80. Italy's second argument, which, unlike its first argument, applies to all of the claims brought before the Italian courts, is that the denial of immunity was justified on account of the particular nature of the acts forming the subject-matter of the claims before the Italian courts and the circumstances in which those claims were made. There are three strands to this argument. First, Italy contends that the acts which gave rise to the claims constituted serious violations of the principles of international law applicable to the conduct of armed conflict, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Secondly, Italy maintains that the rules of international law thus contravened were peremptory norms *(jus cogens)*. Thirdly, Italy argues that the claimants having been denied all other forms of redress, the exercise of jurisdiction by the Italian courts was necessary as a matter of last resort. The Court will consider each of these strands in turn, while recognizing that, in the oral proceedings, Italy also contended that its courts had been entitled to deny State immunity because of the combined effect of these three strands.

A. The gravity of the violations

81. The first strand is based upon the proposition that international law does not accord immunity to a State, or at least restricts its right to immunity, when that State has committed serious violations of the law of armed conflict (international humanitarian law as it is more commonly termed today, although the term was not used in 1943-1945). In the present case, the Court has already made clear (see paragraph 52 above) that the actions of the German armed forces and other organs of the German Reich giving rise to the proceedings before the Italian courts were serious violations of the law of armed conflict which amounted to crimes under international law. The question is whether that fact operates to deprive Germany of an entitlement to immunity.

82. At the outset, however, the Court must observe that the proposition that the availability of immunity will be to some extent dependent upon the gravity of the unlawful act presents a logical problem. Immunity from jurisdiction is an immunity not merely from being subjected to an adverse judgment but from being subjected to the trial process. It is, therefore, necessarily preliminary in nature. Consequently, a national court is required to determine whether or not a foreign State is entitled to immunity as a matter of international law before it can hear the merits of the case brought before it and before the facts have been established. If immunity were to be dependent upon the State actually having committed a serious violation of international human rights law or the law of armed conflict, then it would become necessary for the national court to hold an enquiry into the merits in order to determine whether it had jurisdiction. If, on the other hand, the mere allegation that the State had committed such wrongful acts were to be sufficient to deprive the State of its entitlement to immunity, immunity could, in effect be negated simply by skilful construction of the claim.

83. That said, the Court must nevertheless inquire whether customary international law has developed to the point where a State is not entitled to immunity in the case of serious violations of human rights law or the law of armed conflict. Apart from the decisions of the Italian courts which are the subject of the present proceedings, there is almost no State practice which might be considered to support the proposition that a State is deprived of its entitlement to immunity in such a case. Although the Hellenic Supreme Court in the *Distomo* case adopted a form of that proposition, the Special Supreme Court in *Margellos* repudiated that approach two years later. As the Court has noted in paragraph 76 above, under Greek law it is the stance adopted in *Margellos* which must be followed in later cases unless the Greek courts find that there has been a change in customary international law since 2002, which they have not done. As with the territorial tort principle, the Court considers that Greek practice, taken as a whole, tends to deny that the proposition advanced by Italy has become part of customary international law.

84. In addition, there is a substantial body of State practice from other countries which demonstrates that customary international law does not treat a State's entitlement to immunity as dependent upon the gravity of the act of which it is accused or the peremptory nature of the rule which it is alleged to have violated.

85. That practice is particularly evident in the judgments of national courts. Arguments to the effect that international law no longer required State immunity in cases of allegations of serious violations of international human rights law, war crimes or crimes against humanity have been rejected by the courts in Canada (*Bouzari* v. *Islamic Republic of Iran*, Court of Appeal of Ontario, [2004] *Dominion Law Reports (DLR)*, 4th Series, Vol. 243, p. 406; *ILR*, Vol. 128, p. 586; allegations of torture), France (judgment of the Court of Appeal of Paris, 9 September 2002, and *Cour de cassation*, No. 02-45961, 16 December 2003, *Bulletin civil de la Cour de cassation (Bull. civ.)*, 2003, I, No. 258, p. 206 (the *Bucheron* case); *Cour de cassation*, No. 03-41851, 2 June 2004, *Bull. civ.*, 2004, I, No. 158, p. 132 (the *X* case) and *Cour de cassation*, No. 04-47504, 3 January 2006 (the *Grosz* case); allegations of crimes against humanity), Slovenia (case No. Up-13/99, Constitutional Court of Slovenia; allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity), New Zealand (*Fang* v. *Jiang*, High Court, [2007] *New Zealand Administrative Reports (NZAR)*, p. 420; *ILR*, Vol. 141, p. 702; allegations of torture), Poland (*Natoniewski*, Supreme Court, 2010, *Polish Yearbook of International Law*, Vol. XXX, 2010, p. 299; allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity) and the United Kingdom (*Jones* v. *Saudi Arabia*, House of Lords, [2007] 1 *Appeal Cases (AC)* 270; *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 629; allegations of torture).

86. The Court notes that, in its response to a question posed by a Member of the Court, Italy itself appeared to demonstrate uncertainty about this aspect of its case. Italy commented,

> "Italy is aware of the view according to which war crimes and crimes against humanity could not be considered to be sovereign acts for which the State is entitled to invoke the defence of sovereign immunity . . . While Italy acknowledges that in this area the law of State immunity is undergoing a process of change, it also recognizes that it is not clear at this stage whether this process will result in a new general exception to immunity — namely a rule denying immunity with respect to every claim for compensation arising out [of] international crimes."

A similar uncertainty is evident in the orders of the Italian Court of Cassation in *Mantelli* and *Maietta* (orders of 29 May 2008).

87. The Court does not consider that the United Kingdom judgment in *Pinochet (No. 3)* ([2000] 1 *AC* 147; *ILR*, Vol. 119, p. 136) is relevant, notwithstanding the reliance placed on that judgment by the Italian Court

of Cassation in *Ferrini*. *Pinochet* concerned the immunity of a former Head of State from the criminal jurisdiction of another State, not the immunity of the State itself in proceedings designed to establish its liability to damages. The distinction between the immunity of the official in the former type of case and that of the State in the latter case was emphasized by several of the judges in *Pinochet* (Lord Hutton at pp. 254 and 264, Lord Millett at p. 278 and Lord Phillips at pp. 280-281). In its later judgment in *Jones* v. *Saudi Arabia* ([2007] 1 *AC* 270; *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 629), the House of Lords further clarified this distinction, Lord Bingham describing the distinction between criminal and civil proceedings as "fundamental to the decision" in *Pinochet* (para. 32). Moreover, the rationale for the judgment in *Pinochet* was based upon the specific language of the 1984 United Nations Convention against Torture, which has no bearing on the present case.

88. With reference to national legislation, Italy referred to an amendment to the United States Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, first adopted in 1996. That amendment withdraws immunity for certain specified acts (for example, torture and extra-judicial killings) if allegedly performed by a State which the United States Government has "designated as a State sponsor of terrorism" (28 *USC* 1605A). The Court notes that this amendment has no counterpart in the legislation of other States. None of the States which has enacted legislation on the subject of State immunity has made provision for the limitation of immunity on the grounds of the gravity of the acts alleged.

89. It is also noticeable that there is no limitation of State immunity by reference to the gravity of the violation or the peremptory character of the rule breached in the European Convention, the United Nations Convention or the draft Inter-American Convention. The absence of any such provision from the United Nations Convention is particularly significant, because the question whether such a provision was necessary was raised at the time that the text of what became the Convention was under consideration. In 1999 the International Law Commission established a Working Group which considered certain developments in practice regarding some issues of State immunity which had been identified by the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. In an appendix to its report, the Working Group referred, as an additional matter, to developments regarding claims "in the case of death or personal injury resulting from acts of a State in violation of human rights norms having the character of *jus cogens*" and stated that this issue was one which should not be ignored, although it did not recommend any amendment to the text of the International Law Commission Articles (*Yearbook of the International Law Commission*, 1999, Vol. II (2), pp. 171-172). The matter was then considered by the Working Group established by the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly, which reported later in 1999 that it had decided not to take up the matter as "it did not seem to be ripe enough for the Working

Group to engage in a codification exercise over it" and commented that it was for the Sixth Committee to decide what course of action, if any, should be taken (United Nations doc. A/C.6/54/L.12, p. 7, para. 13). During the subsequent debates in the Sixth Committee no State suggested that a *jus cogens* limitation to immunity should be included in the Convention. The Court considers that this history indicates that, at the time of adoption of the United Nations Convention in 2004, States did not consider that customary international law limited immunity in the manner now suggested by Italy.

90. The European Court of Human Rights has not accepted the proposition that States are no longer entitled to immunity in cases regarding serious violations of international humanitarian law or human rights law. In 2001, the Grand Chamber of that Court, by the admittedly narrow majority of nine to eight, concluded that,

> "Notwithstanding the special character of the prohibition of torture in international law, the Court is unable to discern in the international instruments, judicial authorities or other materials before it any firm basis for concluding that, as a matter of international law, a State no longer enjoys immunity from civil suit in the courts of another State where acts of torture are alleged." (*Al-Adsani* v. *United Kingdom* [GC], application No. 35763/97, judgment of 21 November 2001, *ECHR Reports* 2001-XI, p. 101, para. 61; *ILR*, Vol. 123, p. 24.)

The following year, in *Kalogeropoulou and Others* v. *Greece and Germany*, the European Court of Human Rights rejected an application relating to the refusal of the Greek Government to permit enforcement of the *Distomo* judgment and said that,

> "The Court does not find it established, however, that there is yet acceptance in international law of the proposition that States are not entitled to immunity in respect of civil claims for damages brought against them in another State for crimes against humanity." (Application No. 59021/00, decision of 12 December 2002, *ECHR Reports* 2002-X, p. 417; *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 537.)

91. The Court concludes that, under customary international law as it presently stands, a State is not deprived of immunity by reason of the fact that it is accused of serious violations of international human rights law or the international law of armed conflict. In reaching that conclusion, the Court must emphasize that it is addressing only the immunity of the State itself from the jurisdiction of the courts of other States; the question of whether, and if so to what extent, immunity might apply in criminal proceedings against an official of the State is not in issue in the present case.

B. The relationship between jus cogens *and the rule of State immunity*

92. The Court now turns to the second strand in Italy's argument, which emphasizes the *jus cogens* status of the rules which were violated by Germany during the period 1943-1945. This strand of the argument rests on the premise that there is a conflict between *jus cogens* rules forming part of the law of armed conflict and according immunity to Germany. Since *jus cogens* rules always prevail over any inconsistent rule of international law, whether contained in a treaty or in customary international law, so the argument runs, and since the rule which accords one State immunity before the courts of another does not have the status of *jus cogens*, the rule of immunity must give way.

93. This argument therefore depends upon the existence of a conflict between a rule, or rules, of *jus cogens*, and the rule of customary law which requires one State to accord immunity to another. In the opinion of the Court, however, no such conflict exists. Assuming for this purpose that the rules of the law of armed conflict which prohibit the murder of civilians in occupied territory, the deportation of civilian inhabitants to slave labour and the deportation of prisoners of war to slave labour are rules of *jus cogens*, there is no conflict between those rules and the rules on State immunity. The two sets of rules address different matters. The rules of State immunity are procedural in character and are confined to determining whether or not the courts of one State may exercise jurisdiction in respect of another State. They do not bear upon the question whether or not the conduct in respect of which the proceedings are brought was lawful or unlawful. That is why the application of the contemporary law of State immunity to proceedings concerning events which occurred in 1943-1945 does not infringe the principle that law should not be applied retrospectively to determine matters of legality and responsibility (as the Court has explained in paragraph 58 above). For the same reason, recognizing the immunity of a foreign State in accordance with customary international law does not amount to recognizing as lawful a situation created by the breach of a *jus cogens* rule, or rendering aid and assistance in maintaining that situation, and so cannot contravene the principle in Article 41 of the International Law Commission's Articles on State Responsibility.

94. In the present case, the violation of the rules prohibiting murder, deportation and slave labour took place in the period 1943-1945. The illegality of these acts is openly acknowledged by all concerned. The application of rules of State immunity to determine whether or not the Italian courts have jurisdiction to hear claims arising out of those violations cannot involve any conflict with the rules which were violated. Nor is the argument strengthened by focusing upon the duty of the wrongdoing State to make reparation, rather than upon the original wrongful act. The duty to make reparation is a rule which exists independently of those rules which concern the means by which it is to be effected. The law of

State immunity concerns only the latter; a decision that a foreign State is immune no more conflicts with the duty to make reparation than it does with the rule prohibiting the original wrongful act. Moreover, against the background of a century of practice in which almost every peace treaty or post-war settlement has involved either a decision not to require the payment of reparations or the use of lump sum settlements and set-offs, it is difficult to see that international law contains a rule requiring the payment of full compensation to each and every individual victim as a rule accepted by the international community of States as a whole as one from which no derogation is permitted.

95. To the extent that it is argued that no rule which is not of the status of *jus cogens* may be applied if to do so would hinder the enforcement of a *jus cogens* rule, even in the absence of a direct conflict, the Court sees no basis for such a proposition. A *jus cogens* rule is one from which no derogation is permitted but the rules which determine the scope and extent of jurisdiction and when that jurisdiction may be exercised do not derogate from those substantive rules which possess *jus cogens* status, nor is there anything inherent in the concept of *jus cogens* which would require their modification or would displace their application. The Court has taken that approach in two cases, notwithstanding that the effect was that a means by which a *jus cogens* rule might be enforced was rendered unavailable. In *Armed Activities*, it held that the fact that a rule has the status of *jus cogens* does not confer upon the Court a jurisdiction which it would not otherwise possess (*Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (New Application: 2002) (Democratic Republic of the Congo* v. *Rwanda), Jurisdiction and Admissibility, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2006*, p. 32, para. 64, and p. 52, para. 125). In *Arrest Warrant*, the Court held, albeit without express reference to the concept of *jus cogens*, that the fact that a Minister for Foreign Affairs was accused of criminal violations of rules which undoubtedly possess the character of *jus cogens* did not deprive the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the entitlement which it possessed as a matter of customary international law to demand immunity on his behalf (*Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (Democratic Republic of the Congo* v. *Belgium), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2002*, p. 24, para. 58, and p. 33, para. 78). The Court considers that the same reasoning is applicable to the application of the customary international law regarding the immunity of one State from proceedings in the courts of another.

96. In addition, this argument about the effect of *jus cogens* displacing the law of State immunity has been rejected by the national courts of the United Kingdom (*Jones* v. *Saudi Arabia*, House of Lords, [2007] 1 *AC* 270; *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 629), Canada (*Bouzari* v. *Islamic Republic of Iran*, Court of Appeal of Ontario, *DLR*, 4th Series, Vol. 243, p. 406; *ILR*, Vol. 128, p. 586), Poland (*Natoniewski*, Supreme Court, *Polish Yearbook of International Law*, Vol. XXX, 2010, p. 299), Slovenia (case No. Up-13/99, Constitutional Court of Slovenia), New Zealand (*Fang* v. *Jiang*, High Court, [2007] *NZAR*, p. 420; *ILR*, Vol. 141, p. 702) and Greece (*Margel-*

los, Special Supreme Court, *ILR*, Vol. 129, p. 525), as well as by the European Court of Human Rights in *Al-Adsani* v. *United Kingdom* and *Kalogeropoulou and Others* v. *Greece and Germany* (which are discussed in paragraph 90 above), in each case after careful consideration. The Court does not consider the judgment of the French *Cour de cassation* of 9 March 2011 in *La Réunion aérienne* v. *Libyan Arab Jamahiriya* (case No. 09-14743, 9 March 2011, *Bull. civ.*, March 2011, No. 49, p. 49) as supporting a different conclusion. The *Cour de cassation* in that case stated only that, even if a *jus cogens* norm could constitute a legitimate restriction on State immunity, such a restriction could not be justified on the facts of that case. It follows, therefore, that the judgments of the Italian courts which are the subject of the present proceedings are the only decisions of national courts to have accepted the reasoning on which this part of Italy's second argument is based. Moreover, none of the national legislation on State immunity considered in paragraphs 70-71 above, has limited immunity in cases where violations of *jus cogens* are alleged.

97. Accordingly, the Court concludes that even on the assumption that the proceedings in the Italian courts involved violations of *jus cogens* rules, the applicability of the customary international law on State immunity was not affected.

C. The "last resort" argument

98. The third and final strand of the Italian argument is that the Italian courts were justified in denying Germany the immunity to which it would otherwise have been entitled, because all other attempts to secure compensation for the various groups of victims involved in the Italian proceedings had failed. Germany's response is that in the aftermath of the Second World War it made considerable financial and other sacrifices by way of reparation in the context of a complex series of inter-State arrangements under which, reflecting the economic realities of the time, no Allied State received compensation for the full extent of the losses which its people had suffered. It also points to the payments which it made to Italy under the terms of the two 1961 Agreements and to the payments made more recently under the 2000 Federal Law to various Italians who had been unlawfully deported to forced labour in Germany. Italy maintains, however, that large numbers of Italian victims were nevertheless left without any compensation.

*

99. The Court notes that Germany has taken significant steps to ensure

that a measure of reparation was made to Italian victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Nevertheless, Germany decided to exclude from the scope of its national compensation scheme most of the claims by Italian military internees on the ground that prisoners of war were not entitled to compensation for forced labour (see paragraph 26 above). The overwhelming majority of Italian military internees were, in fact, denied treatment as prisoners of war by the Nazi authorities. Notwithstanding that history, in 2001 the German Government determined that those internees were ineligible for compensation because they had had a legal entitlement to prisoner-of-war status. The Court considers that it is a matter of surprise — and regret — that Germany decided to deny compensation to a group of victims on the ground that they had been entitled to a status which, at the relevant time, Germany had refused to recognize, particularly since those victims had thereby been denied the legal protection to which that status entitled them.

100. Moreover, as the Court has said, albeit in the different context of the immunity of State officials from criminal proceedings, the fact that immunity may bar the exercise of jurisdiction in a particular case does not alter the applicability of the substantive rules of international law (*Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (Democratic Republic of the Congo* v. *Belgium), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2002*, p. 25, para. 60; see also *Certain Questions of Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (Djibouti* v. *France), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2008*, p. 244, para. 196). In that context, the Court would point out that whether a State is entitled to immunity before the courts of another State is a question entirely separate from whether the international responsibility of that State is engaged and whether it has an obligation to make reparation.

101. That notwithstanding, the Court cannot accept Italy's contention that the alleged shortcomings in Germany's provisions for reparation to Italian victims entitled the Italian courts to deprive Germany of jurisdictional immunity. The Court can find no basis in the State practice from which customary international law is derived that international law makes the entitlement of a State to immunity dependent upon the existence of effective alternative means of securing redress. Neither in the national legislation on the subject, nor in the jurisprudence of the national courts which have been faced with objections based on immunity, is there any evidence that entitlement to immunity is subjected to such a precondition. States also did not include any such condition in either the European Convention or the United Nations Convention.

102. Moreover, the Court cannot fail to observe that the application of any such condition, if it indeed existed, would be exceptionally difficult in practice, particularly in a context such as that of the present case, when claims have been the subject of extensive intergovernmental discussion. If one follows the Italian argument, while such discussions were still ongoing

and had a prospect of achieving a successful outcome, then it seems that immunity would still prevail, whereas, again according to this argument, immunity would presumably cease to apply at some point when prospects for an inter-State settlement were considered to have disappeared. Yet national courts in one of the countries concerned are unlikely to be well placed to determine when that point has been reached. Moreover, if a lump sum settlement has been made — which has been the normal practice in the aftermath of war, as Italy recognizes — then the determination of whether a particular claimant continued to have an entitlement to compensation would entail an investigation by the court of the details of that settlement and the manner in which the State which had received funds (in this case the State in which the court in question is located) has distributed those funds. Where the State receiving funds as part of what was intended as a comprehensive settlement in the aftermath of an armed conflict has elected to use those funds to rebuild its national economy and infrastructure, rather than distributing them to individual victims amongst its nationals, it is difficult to see why the fact that those individuals had not received a share in the money should be a reason for entitling them to claim against the State that had transferred money to their State of nationality.

103. The Court therefore rejects Italy's argument that Germany could be refused immunity on this basis.

104. In coming to this conclusion, the Court is not unaware that the immunity from jurisdiction of Germany in accordance with international law may preclude judicial redress for the Italian nationals concerned.

It considers however that the claims arising from the treatment of the Italian military internees referred to in paragraph 99, together with other claims of Italian nationals which have allegedly not been settled — and which formed the basis for the Italian proceedings — could be the subject of further negotiation involving the two States concerned, with a view to resolving the issue.

D. The combined effect of the circumstances relied upon by Italy

105. In the course of the oral proceedings, counsel for Italy maintained that the three strands of Italy's second argument had to be viewed together; it was because of the cumulative effect of the gravity of the violations, the status of the rules violated and the absence of alternative means of redress that the Italian courts had been justified in refusing to accord immunity to Germany.

106. The Court has already held that none of the three strands of the second Italian argument would, of itself, justify the action of the Italian courts. It is not persuaded that they would have that effect if taken together. Nothing in the examination of State practice lends support to the proposition that the concurrent presence of two, or even all three, of these elements would justify the refusal by a national court to accord to a respondent State the immunity to which it would otherwise be entitled.

In so far as the argument based on the combined effect of the circumstances is to be understood as meaning that the national court should balance the different factors, assessing the respective weight, on the one hand, of the various circumstances that might justify the exercise of its jurisdiction, and, on the other hand, of the interests attaching to the protection of immunity, such an approach would disregard the very nature of State immunity. As explained in paragraph 56 above, according to international law, State immunity, where it exists, is a right of the foreign State. In addition, as explained in paragraph 82 of this Judgment, national courts have to determine questions of immunity at the outset of the proceedings, before consideration of the merits. Immunity cannot, therefore, be made dependent upon the outcome of a balancing exercise of the specific circumstances of each case to be conducted by the national court before which immunity is claimed.

4. Conclusions

107. The Court therefore holds that the action of the Italian courts in denying Germany the immunity to which the Court has held it was entitled under customary international law constitutes a breach of the obligations owed by the Italian State to Germany.

108. It is, therefore, unnecessary for the Court to consider a number of questions which were discussed at some length by the Parties. In particular, the Court need not rule on whether, as Italy contends, international law confers upon the individual victim of a violation of the law of armed conflict a directly enforceable right to claim compensation. Nor need it rule on whether, as Germany maintains, Article 77, paragraph 4, of the Treaty of Peace or the provisions of the 1961 Agreements amounted to a binding waiver of the claims which are the subject of the Italian proceedings. That is not to say, of course, that these are unimportant questions, only that they are not ones which fall for decision within the limits of the present case. The question whether Germany still has a responsibility towards Italy, or individual Italians, in respect of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by it during the Second World War does not affect Germany's entitlement to immunity. Similarly, the Court's ruling on the issue of immunity can have no effect on whatever responsibility Germany may have.

IV. The Measures of Constraint Taken against Property Belonging to Germany Located on Italian Territory

109. On 7 June 2007, certain Greek claimants, in reliance on a decision of the Florence Court of Appeal of 13 June 2006, declaring enforceable in

Italy the judgment rendered by the Court of First Instance of Livadia, in Greece, which had ordered Germany to pay them compensation, entered in the Land Registry of the Province of Como a legal charge against Villa Vigoni, a property of the German State located near Lake Como (see above, paragraph 35).

110. Germany argued before the Court that such a measure of constraint violates the immunity from enforcement to which it is entitled under international law. Italy has not sought to justify that measure; on the contrary, it indicated to the Court that it "has no objection to any decision by the Court obliging Italy to ensure that the mortgage on Villa Vigoni inscribed at the land registry is cancelled".

111. As a result of Decree-Law No. 63 of 28 April 2010, Law No. 98 of 23 June 2010 and Decree-Law No. 216 of 29 December 2011, the charge in question was suspended in order to take account of the pending proceedings before the Court in the present case. It has not, however, been cancelled.

112. The Court considers that, notwithstanding the above-mentioned suspension, and the absence of any argument by Italy seeking to establish the international legality of the measures of constraint in question, a dispute still exists between the Parties on this issue, the subject of which has not disappeared. Italy has not formally admitted that the legal charge on Villa Vigoni constituted a measure contrary to its international obligations. Nor, as just stated, has it put an end to the effects of that measure, but has merely suspended them. It has told the Court, through its Agent, that the decisions of the Italian courts rendered against Germany have been suspended by legislation pending the decision of this Court, and that execution of those decisions "will only occur should the Court decide that Italy has not committed the wrongful acts complained of by Germany". That implies that the charge on Villa Vigoni might be reactivated, should the Court conclude that it is not contrary to international law. Without asking the Court to reach such a conclusion, Italy does not exclude it, and awaits the Court's ruling before taking the appropriate action thereon.

It follows that the Court should rule, as both Parties wish it to do, on the second of Germany's submissions, which concerns the dispute over the measure of constraint taken against Villa Vigoni.

113. Before considering whether the claims of the Applicant on this point are well-founded, the Court observes that the immunity from enforcement enjoyed by States in regard to their property situated on foreign territory goes further than the jurisdictional immunity enjoyed by those same States before foreign courts. Even if a judgment has been lawfully rendered against a foreign State, in circumstances such that the latter could not claim immunity from jurisdiction, it does not follow *ipso facto* that the State against which judgment has been given can be the subject of measures of constraint on the territory of the forum State or on that of a third State, with a view to enforcing the judgment in question. Similarly, any waiver by a State of its jurisdictional immunity before a

foreign court does not in itself mean that that State has waived its immunity from enforcement as regards property belonging to it situated in foreign territory.

The rules of customary international law governing immunity from enforcement and those governing jurisdictional immunity (understood *stricto sensu* as the right of a State not to be the subject of judicial proceedings in the courts of another State) are distinct, and must be applied separately.

114. In the present case, this means that the Court may rule on the issue of whether the charge on Villa Vigoni constitutes a measure of constraint in violation of Germany's immunity from enforcement, without needing to determine whether the decisions of the Greek courts awarding pecuniary damages against Germany, for purposes of whose enforcement that measure was taken, were themselves in breach of that State's jurisdictional immunity.

Likewise, the issue of the international legality of the measure of constraint in question, in light of the rules applicable to immunity from enforcement, is separate — and may therefore be considered separately — from that of the international legality, under the rules applicable to jurisdictional immunity, of the decisions of the Italian courts which declared enforceable on Italian territory the Greek judgments against Germany. This latter question, which is the subject of the third of the submissions presented to the Court by Germany (see above paragraph 17), will be addressed in the following section of this Judgment.

115. In support of its claim on the point under discussion here, Germany cited the rules set out in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention. That Convention has not entered into force, but in Germany's view it codified, in relation to the issue of immunity from enforcement, the existing rules under general international law. Its terms are therefore said to be binding, inasmuch as they reflect customary law on the matter.

116. Article 19, entitled "State immunity from post-judgment measures of constraint", reads as follows:

> "No post-judgment measures of constraint, such as attachment, arrest or execution, against property of a State may be taken in connection with a proceeding before a court of another State unless and except to the extent that:
>
> *(a)* the State has expressly consented to the taking of such measures as indicated:
>
> (i) by international agreement;
> (ii) by an arbitration agreement or in a written contract; or
> (iii) by a declaration before the court or by a written communication after a dispute between the parties has arisen; or
>
> *(b)* the State has allocated or earmarked property for the satisfaction of the claim which is the object of that proceeding; or

(c) it has been established that the property is specifically in use or intended for use by the State for other than government non-commercial purposes and is in the territory of the State of the forum, provided that post-judgment measures of constraint may only be taken against property that has a connection with the entity against which the proceeding was directed."

117. When the United Nations Convention was being drafted, these provisions gave rise to long and difficult discussions. The Court considers that it is unnecessary for purposes of the present case for it to decide whether all aspects of Article 19 reflect current customary international law.

118. Indeed, it suffices for the Court to find that there is at least one condition that has to be satisfied before any measure of constraint may be taken against property belonging to a foreign State: that the property in question must be in use for an activity not pursuing government non-commercial purposes, or that the State which owns the property has expressly consented to the taking of a measure of constraint, or that that State has allocated the property in question for the satisfaction of a judicial claim (an illustration of this well-established practice is provided by the decision of the German Constitutional Court *(Bundesverfassungsgericht)* of 14 December 1977 (*BVerfGE*, Vol. 46, p. 342; *ILR*, Vol. 65, p. 146), by the judgment of the Swiss Federal Tribunal of 30 April 1986 in *Kingdom of Spain* v. *Société X* (*Annuaire suisse de droit international*, Vol. 43, 1987, p. 158; *ILR*, Vol. 82, p. 44), as well as the judgment of the House of Lords of 12 April 1984 in *Alcom Ltd.* v. *Republic of Colombia* ([1984] 1 *AC* 580; *ILR*, Vol. 74, p. 170) and the judgment of the Spanish Constitutional Court of 1 July 1992 in *Abbott* v. *Republic of South Africa* (*Revista española de derecho internacional*, Vol. 44, 1992, p. 565; *ILR*, Vol. 113, p. 414)).

119. It is clear in the present case that the property which was the subject of the measure of constraint at issue is being used for governmental purposes that are entirely non-commercial, and hence for purposes falling within Germany's sovereign functions. Villa Vigoni is in fact the seat of a cultural centre intended to promote cultural exchanges between Germany and Italy. This cultural centre is organized and administered on the basis of an agreement between the two Governments concluded in the form of an exchange of notes dated 21 April 1986. Before the Court, Italy described the activities in question as a "centre of excellence for the Italian-German co-operation in the fields of research, culture and education", and recognized that Italy was directly involved in "its peculiar bi-national . . . managing structure". Nor has Germany in any way expressly consented to the taking of a measure such as the legal charge in question, or allocated Villa Vigoni for the satisfaction of the judicial claims against it.

120. In these circumstances, the Court finds that the registration of a legal charge on Villa Vigoni constitutes a violation by Italy of its obligation to respect the immunity owed to Germany.

V. The Decisions of the Italian Courts Declaring Enforceable in Italy Decisions of Greek Courts Upholding Civil Claims against Germany

121. In its third submission, Germany complains that its jurisdictional immunity was also violated by decisions of the Italian courts declaring enforceable in Italy judgments rendered by Greek courts against Germany in proceedings arising out of the Distomo massacre. In 1995, successors in title of the victims of that massacre, committed by the German armed forces in a Greek village in June 1944, brought proceedings for compensation against Germany before the Greek courts. By a judgment of 25 September 1997, the Court of First Instance of Livadia, which had territorial jurisdiction, ordered Germany to pay compensation to the claimants. The appeal by Germany against that judgment was dismissed by a decision of the Hellenic Supreme Court of 4 May 2000, which rendered final the judgment of the Court of First Instance, and at the same time ordered Germany to pay the costs of the appeal proceedings. The successful Greek claimants under the first-instance and Supreme Court judgments applied to the Italian courts for *exequatur* of those judgments, so as to be able to have them enforced in Italy, since it was impossible to enforce them in Greece or in Germany (see above, paragraphs 30 and 32). It was on those applications that the Florence Court of Appeal ruled, allowing them by a decision of 13 June 2006, which was confirmed, following an objection by Germany, on 21 October 2008 as regards the pecuniary damages awarded by the Court of First Instance of Livadia, and by a decision of 2 May 2005, confirmed, following an objection by Germany, on 6 February 2007 as regards the award of costs made by the Hellenic Supreme Court. This latter decision was confirmed by the Italian Court of Cassation on 6 May 2008. As regards the decision confirming the *exequatur* granted in respect of the judgment of the Court of First Instance of Livadia, it has also been appealed to the Italian Court of Cassation, which dismissed that appeal on 12 January 2011.

122. According to Germany, the decisions of the Florence Court of Appeal declaring enforceable the judgments of the Livadia court and the Hellenic Supreme Court constitute violations of its jurisdictional immunity, since, for the same reasons as those invoked by Germany in relation to the Italian proceedings concerning war crimes committed in Italy between 1943 and 1945, the decisions of the Greek courts were themselves rendered in violation of that jurisdictional immunity.

123. According to Italy, on the contrary, and for the same reasons as those set out and discussed in Section III of the present Judgment, there was no violation of Germany's jurisdictional immunity, either by the decisions of the Greek courts or by those of the Italian courts which declared them enforceable in Italy.

124. It should first be noted that the claim in Germany's third submission is entirely separate and distinct from that set out in the preceding

one, which has been discussed in Section IV above (paragraphs 109 to 120). The Court is no longer concerned here to determine whether a measure of constraint — such as the legal charge on Villa Vigoni — violated Germany's immunity from enforcement, but to decide whether the Italian judgments declaring enforceable in Italy the pecuniary awards pronounced in Greece did themselves — independently of any subsequent measure of enforcement — constitute a violation of the Applicant's immunity from jurisdiction. While there is a link between these two aspects — since the measure of constraint against Villa Vigoni could only have been imposed on the basis of the judgment of the Florence Court of Appeal according *exequatur* in respect of the judgment of the Greek court in Livadia — the two issues nonetheless remain clearly distinct. That discussed in the preceding section related to immunity from enforcement; that which the Court will now consider addresses immunity from jurisdiction. As recalled above, these two forms of immunity are governed by different sets of rules.

125. The Court will then explain how it views the issue of jurisdictional immunity in relation to a judgment which rules not on the merits of a claim brought against a foreign State, but on an application to have a judgment rendered by a foreign court against a third State declared enforceable on the territory of the State of the court where that application is brought (a request for *exequatur*). The difficulty arises from the fact that, in such cases, the court is not being asked to give judgment directly against a foreign State invoking jurisdictional immunity, but to enforce a decision already rendered by a court of another State, which is deemed to have itself examined and applied the rules governing the jurisdictional immunity of the respondent State.

126. In the present case, the two Parties appear to have argued on the basis that, in such a situation, the question whether the court seised of the application for *exequatur* had respected the jurisdictional immunity of the third State depended simply on whether that immunity had been respected by the foreign court having rendered the judgment on the merits against the third State. In other words, both Parties appeared to make the question whether or not the Florence Court of Appeal had violated Germany's jurisdictional immunity in declaring enforceable the Livadia and Hellenic Supreme Court decisions dependent on whether those decisions had themselves violated the jurisdictional immunity on which Germany had relied in its defence against the proceedings brought against it in Greece.

127. There is nothing to prevent national courts from ascertaining, before granting *exequatur*, that the foreign judgment was not rendered in breach of the immunity of the respondent State. However, for the purposes of the present case, the Court considers that it must address the issue from a significantly different viewpoint. In its view, it is unnecessary, in order to determine whether the Florence Court of Appeal violated Germany's jurisdictional immunity, to rule on the question of whether the decisions of the Greek courts did themselves violate that immunity — something, more-

over, which it could not do, since that would be to rule on the rights and obligations of a State, Greece, which does not have the status of party to the present proceedings (see *Monetary Gold Removed from Rome in 1943 (Italy* v. *France; United Kingdom and United States of America), Preliminary Question, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1954*, p. 32; *East Timor (Portugal* v. *Australia), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1995*, p. 105, para. 34).

The relevant question, from the Court's point of view and for the purposes of the present case, is whether the Italian courts did themselves respect Germany's immunity from jurisdiction in allowing the application for *exequatur*, and not whether the Greek court having rendered the judgment of which *exequatur* is sought had respected Germany's jurisdictional immunity. In a situation of this kind, the replies to these two questions may not necessarily be the same; it is only the first question which the Court needs to address here.

128. Where a court is seised, as in the present case, of an application for *exequatur* of a foreign judgment against a third State, it is itself being called upon to exercise its jurisdiction in respect of the third State in question. It is true that the purpose of *exequatur* proceedings is not to decide on the merits of a dispute, but simply to render an existing judgment enforceable on the territory of a State other than that of the court which ruled on the merits. It is thus not the role of the *exequatur* court to re-examine in all its aspects the substance of the case which has been decided. The fact nonetheless remains that, in granting or refusing *exequatur*, the court exercises a jurisdictional power which results in the foreign judgment being given effects corresponding to those of a judgment rendered on the merits in the requested State. The proceedings brought before that court must therefore be regarded as being conducted against the third State which was the subject of the foreign judgment.

129. In this regard, the Court notes that, under the terms of Article 6, paragraph 2, of the United Nations Convention:

> "A proceeding before a court of a State shall be considered to have been instituted against another State if that other State:
>
> *(a)* is named as a party to that proceeding; or
>
> *(b)* is not named as a party to the proceeding but the proceeding in effect seeks to affect the property, rights, interests or activities of that other State."

When applied to *exequatur* proceedings, that definition means that such proceedings must be regarded as being directed against the State which was the subject of the foreign judgment. That is indeed why Germany was entitled to object to the decisions of the Florence Court of Appeal granting *exequatur* — although it did so without success — and to appeal to the Italian Court of Cassation against the judgments confirming those decisions.

130. It follows from the foregoing that the court seised of an application for *exequatur* of a foreign judgment rendered against a third State has to ask itself whether the respondent State enjoys immunity from jurisdiction — having regard to the nature of the case in which that judgment was

given — before the courts of the State in which *exequatur* proceedings have been instituted. In other words, it has to ask itself whether, in the event that it had itself been seised of the merits of a dispute identical to that which was the subject of the foreign judgment, it would have been obliged under international law to accord immunity to the respondent State (see to this effect the judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Kuwait Airways Corp.* v. *Iraq* ([2010] *SCR*, Vol. 2, p. 571), and the judgment of the United Kingdom Supreme Court in *NML Capital Limited* v. *Republic of Argentina* ([2011] *UKSC* 31).

131. In light of this reasoning, it follows that the Italian courts which declared enforceable in Italy the decisions of Greek courts rendered against Germany have violated the latter's immunity. For the reasons set out in Section III above of the present Judgment, the Italian courts would have been obliged to grant immunity to Germany if they had been seised of the merits of a case identical to that which was the subject of the decisions of the Greek courts which it was sought to declare enforceable (namely, the case of the Distomo massacre). Accordingly, they could not grant *exequatur* without thereby violating Germany's jurisdictional immunity.

132. In order to reach such a decision, it is unnecessary to rule on the question whether the Greek courts did themselves violate Germany's immunity, a question which is not before the Court, and on which, moreover, it cannot rule, for the reasons recalled earlier. The Court will confine itself to noting, in general terms, that it may perfectly well happen, in certain circumstances, that the judgment rendered on the merits did not violate the jurisdictional immunity of the respondent State, for example because the latter had waived its immunity before the courts hearing the case on the merits, but that the *exequatur* proceedings instituted in another State are barred by the respondent's immunity. That is why the two issues are distinct, and why it is not for this Judgment to rule on the legality of the decisions of the Greek courts.

133. The Court accordingly concludes that the above-mentioned decisions of the Florence Court of Appeal constitute a violation by Italy of its obligation to respect the jurisdictional immunity of Germany.

VI. Germany's Final Submissions and the Remedies Sought

134. In its final submissions at the close of the oral proceedings, Germany presented six requests to the Court, of which the first three were declaratory and the final three sought to draw the consequences, in terms of reparation, of the established violations (see paragraph 17 above). It is on those requests that the Court is required to rule in the operative part of this Judgment.

135. For the reasons set out in Sections III, IV and V above, the Court will uphold Germany's first three requests, which ask it to declare, in

turn, that Italy has violated the jurisdictional immunity which Germany enjoys under international law by allowing civil claims based on violations of international humanitarian law by the German Reich between 1943 and 1945; that Italy has also committed violations of the immunity owed to Germany by taking enforcement measures against Villa Vigoni; and, lastly, that Italy has violated Germany's immunity by declaring enforceable in Italy Greek judgments based on occurrences similar to those referred to above.

136. In its fourth submission, Germany asks the Court to adjudge and declare that, in view of the above, Italy's international responsibility is engaged.

There is no doubt that the violation by Italy of certain of its international legal obligations entails its international responsibility and places upon it, by virtue of general international law, an obligation to make full reparation for the injury caused by the wrongful acts committed. The substance, in the present case, of that obligation to make reparation will be considered below, in connection with Germany's fifth and sixth submissions. The Court's ruling thereon will be set out in the operative clause. On the other hand, the Court does not consider it necessary to include an express declaration in the operative clause that Italy's international responsibility is engaged; to do so would be entirely redundant, since that responsibility is automatically inferred from the finding that certain obligations have been violated.

137. In its fifth submission, Germany asks the Court to order Italy to take, by means of its own choosing, any and all steps to ensure that all the decisions of its courts and other judicial authorities infringing Germany's sovereign immunity become unenforceable. This is to be understood as implying that the relevant decisions should cease to have effect.

According to general international law on the responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts, as expressed in this respect by Article 30 *(a)* of the International Law Commission's Articles on the subject, the State responsible for an internationally wrongful act is under an obligation to cease that act, if it is continuing. Furthermore, even if the act in question has ended, the State responsible is under an obligation to re-establish, by way of reparation, the situation which existed before the wrongful act was committed, provided that re-establishment is not materially impossible and that it does not involve a burden for that State out of all proportion to the benefit deriving from restitution instead of compensation. This rule is reflected in Article 35 of the International Law Commission's Articles.

It follows accordingly that the Court must uphold Germany's fifth submission. The decisions and measures infringing Germany's jurisdictional immunities which are still in force must cease to have effect, and the

effects which have already been produced by those decisions and measures must be reversed, in such a way that the situation which existed before the wrongful acts were committed is re-established. It has not been alleged or demonstrated that restitution would be materially impossible in this case, or that it would involve a burden for Italy out of all proportion to the benefit deriving from it. In particular, the fact that some of the violations may have been committed by judicial organs, and some of the legal decisions in question have become final in Italian domestic law, does not lift the obligation incumbent upon Italy to make restitution. On the other hand, the Respondent has the right to choose the means it considers best suited to achieve the required result. Thus, the Respondent is under an obligation to achieve this result by enacting appropriate legislation or by resorting to other methods of its choosing having the same effect.

138. Finally, in its sixth submission, Germany asks the Court to order Italy to take any and all steps to ensure that in the future Italian courts do not entertain legal actions against Germany founded on the occurrences described in its first submission (namely violations of international humanitarian law committed by the German Reich between 1943 and 1945).

As the Court has stated in previous cases (see, in particular, *Dispute regarding Navigational and Related Rights (Costa Rica* v. *Nicaragua), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2009*, p. 267, para. 150), as a general rule, there is no reason to suppose that a State whose act or conduct has been declared wrongful by the Court will repeat that act or conduct in the future, since its good faith must be presumed. Accordingly, while the Court may order the State responsible for an internationally wrongful act to offer assurances of non-repetition to the injured State, or to take specific measures to ensure that the wrongful act is not repeated, it may only do so when there are special circumstances which justify this, which the Court must assess on a case-by-case basis.

In the present case, the Court has no reason to believe that such circumstances exist. Therefore, it will not uphold the last of Germany's final submissions.

* * *

139. For these reasons,

THE COURT,

(1) By twelve votes to three,

Finds that the Italian Republic has violated its obligation to respect the immunity which the Federal Republic of Germany enjoys under interna-

tional law by allowing civil claims to be brought against it based on violations of international humanitarian law committed by the German Reich between 1943 and 1945;

IN FAVOUR: *President* Owada; *Vice-President* Tomka; *Judges* Koroma, Simma, Abraham, Keith, Sepúlveda-Amor, Bennouna, Skotnikov, Greenwood, Xue, Donoghue;

AGAINST: *Judges* Cançado Trindade, Yusuf; *Judge* ad hoc Gaja;

(2) By fourteen votes to one,

Finds that the Italian Republic has violated its obligation to respect the immunity which the Federal Republic of Germany enjoys under international law by taking measures of constraint against Villa Vigoni;

IN FAVOUR: *President* Owada; *Vice-President* Tomka; *Judges* Koroma, Simma, Abraham, Keith, Sepúlveda-Amor, Bennouna, Skotnikov, Yusuf, Greenwood, Xue, Donoghue; *Judge* ad hoc Gaja;

AGAINST: *Judge* Cançado Trindade;

(3) By fourteen votes to one,

Finds that the Italian Republic has violated its obligation to respect the immunity which the Federal Republic of Germany enjoys under international law by declaring enforceable in Italy decisions of Greek courts based on violations of international humanitarian law committed in Greece by the German Reich;

IN FAVOUR: *President* Owada; *Vice-President* Tomka; *Judges* Koroma, Simma, Abraham, Keith, Sepúlveda-Amor, Bennouna, Skotnikov, Yusuf, Greenwood, Xue, Donoghue; *Judge* ad hoc Gaja;

AGAINST: *Judge* Cançado Trindade;

(4) By fourteen votes to one,

Finds that the Italian Republic must, by enacting appropriate legislation, or by resorting to other methods of its choosing, ensure that the decisions of its courts and those of other judicial authorities infringing the immunity which the Federal Republic of Germany enjoys under international law cease to have effect;

IN FAVOUR: *President* Owada; *Vice-President* Tomka; *Judges* Koroma, Simma, Abraham, Keith, Sepúlveda-Amor, Bennouna, Skotnikov, Yusuf, Greenwood, Xue, Donoghue; *Judge* ad hoc Gaja;

AGAINST: *Judge* Cançado Trindade;

(5) Unanimously,

Rejects all other submissions made by the Federal Republic of Germany.

Done in French and in English, the French text being authoritative, at the Peace Palace, The Hague, this third day of February, two thousand

and twelve, in four copies, one of which will be placed in the archives of the Court and the others transmitted to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Government of the Italian Republic and the Government of the Hellenic Republic, respectively.

(*Signed*) Hisashi OWADA,
President.

(*Signed*) Philippe COUVREUR,
Registrar.

Judges KOROMA, KEITH and BENNOUNA append separate opinions to the Judgment of the Court; Judges CANÇADO TRINDADE and YUSUF append dissenting opinions to the Judgment of the Court; Judge *ad hoc* GAJA appends a dissenting opinion to the Judgment of the Court.

(*Initialled*) H.O.

(*Initialled*) Ph.C.