



# INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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## Press Release

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### **Amendments to Articles 50 and 56 of the Rules of Court and Practice Directions III, IXbis, IXter and XII**

THE HAGUE, 27 October 2026. As part of the ongoing review of its procedures and working methods, the International Court of Justice has amended Articles 50 and 56 of the Rules of Court and Practice Directions III, IXbis, IXter and XII. These amendments, which follow a review by the Court of its existing rules and practice concerning the treatment of evidence: (1) remove the reference to “readily available” documents throughout the Rules of Court and Practice Directions; (2) clarify that the 750-page limit for annexes to pleadings provided for in Practice Direction III applies to the total number of pages of annexes submitted by a party in a particular phase of the proceedings, and specify the types of pages that count towards the page limit; (3) specify in Practice Direction IX bis that parties may refer to subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law as part of their legal arguments without annexing their text to the written pleadings; (4) provide additional guidance for the preparation of judges’ folders in Practice Direction IXter; and (5) modernize the arrangements in Practice Direction XII for making written statements and documents submitted by international non-governmental organizations in advisory proceedings accessible to participating States and international organizations.

The amended Rules and Practice Directions will enter into force on 1 February 2027 and will apply to all proceedings instituted after that date. With respect to pending contentious proceedings, with a view to ensuring equality of treatment in the preparation of pleadings in a given round, these provisions will apply only to rounds of written pleadings that have not yet commenced, pursuant to an order establishing procedural time-limits, on 1 February 2027.

The text of the amended Rules and Practice Directions reads as follows:

#### *Article 50 of the Rules of Court*

- “1. There shall be annexed to the original of every pleading certified copies of any relevant documents adduced in support of the contentions contained in the pleading.
2. If only parts of a document are relevant, only such extracts as are necessary for the purpose of the pleading in question need be annexed. A copy of the whole document shall be deposited in the Registry.
3. A list of all documents annexed to a pleading shall be furnished at the time the pleading is filed.”

*Article 56 of the Rules of Court*

- “1. After the closure of the written proceedings, no further documents may be submitted to the Court by either party except with the consent of the other party or as provided in paragraph 2 of this Article. The party desiring to produce a new document shall file the original or a certified copy thereof, together with the number of copies required by the Registry, which shall be responsible for communicating it to the other party and shall inform the Court. The other party shall be held to have given its consent if it does not lodge an objection to the production of the document.
2. In the absence of consent, the Court, after hearing the parties, may, if it considers the document necessary, authorize its production.
3. If a new document is produced under paragraph 1 or paragraph 2 of this Article, the other party shall have an opportunity of commenting upon it and of submitting documents in support of its comments.
4. No reference may be made during the oral proceedings to the contents of any document which has not been produced in accordance with Article 43 of the Statute or this Article.
5. The application of the provisions of this Article shall not in itself constitute a ground for delaying the opening or the course of the oral proceedings.”

*Practice Direction III*

“The parties are strongly urged to keep the written pleadings as concise as possible, in a manner compatible with the full presentation of their positions.

In view of an excessive tendency towards the proliferation and protraction of annexes to written pleadings, the parties are also urged to append to their pleadings only strictly selected documents.

If only parts of a document are relevant in connection with written pleadings, such relevant parts shall be annexed to the respective written pleadings as required by Article 50, paragraph 2, of the Rules of Court.

Documents that are not produced in an annex and only referred to in the written pleadings by citation, including by hyperlinks, are not to be considered part of the case file.

The number of pages of annexes attached by a party to its written pleadings shall not exceed 750 in total in a particular phase of the proceedings, unless the Court, or the President if the Court is not sitting, decides, upon request of a party, that a number in excess of that limit is warranted, in the particular circumstances of the case. For the purposes of calculating the page limit, pages containing substantive text information in one of the official languages of the Court, as well as pages displaying maps, diagrams and photographs, will be counted. Cover pages, certifications, texts in the original language when in a language other than one of the official languages of the Court, or an additional version in the other official language of the Court will not be counted towards this limit. Parties shall provide a calculation of the number of pages of annexes when they submit their pleading.”

*Practice Direction IXbis*

“Nothing in the Rules of Court prevents the parties from referring to subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law, as part of legal arguments in their written or oral pleadings. Texts reproducing subsidiary means or parts of them referred to by the parties as part of their legal arguments need not be annexed to the written pleadings.”

*Practice Direction IXter*

“The Court has noted the practice by the parties of preparing folders of documents for the convenience of the judges during the oral proceedings. The Court invites parties to exercise restraint in this regard and recalls that the documents included in the judges’ folder must be produced in accordance with Article 43 of the Statute or Article 56, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Rules of Court. No other documents may be included in the folder. In addition, parties must indicate from which annex to the written pleadings or which document produced under Article 56, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Rules, the documents included in the judges’ folder originate.”

*Practice Direction XII*

- “1. Where an international non-governmental organization submits a written statement and/or document in advisory proceedings on its own initiative, such statement and/or document is not to be considered part of the case file.
2. Such statements and/or documents may be referred to by States and intergovernmental organizations presenting written and oral statements in the case.
3. Written statements and/or documents submitted by international non-governmental organizations will be made accessible electronically. All States as well as intergovernmental organizations presenting written or oral statements under Article 66 of the Statute will be given access to such statements and/or documents.”

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

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The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Charter in June 1945 and began its activities in April 1946. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected for a nine-year term by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Kingdom of the Netherlands). The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States; and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.

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