

**SPEECH BY HE JUDGE IWASAWA YUJI, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT
OF JUSTICE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE EIGHTY-FIRST SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

29 October 2026

Mr President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honour to address you today, for the final time during my presidency, as the General Assembly considers the annual report of the International Court of Justice. I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Assembly for its continued interest in the work of the Court. I recall that this important tradition of giving the President of the Court the opportunity to provide a yearly overview of the Court's judicial activities began in 1968 and has since proved to be a very useful way for these two sister organs of the United Nations to maintain direct contact.

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Dr Khalilur Rahman on his election as President of the eighty-first session of this eminent Assembly and to wish him every success in this distinguished role. On behalf of the Court, I would like to express our deep appreciation for your kind words about the work of the Court.

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Before turning to the crux of my speech, let me first highlight the fact that this year the International Court of Justice has marked its eightieth anniversary — an important milestone in the life of our institution and one that has inspired the Court to engage in self-reflection, to renew its commitment to progress and to redouble its outreach efforts aimed at disseminating information about its work and mandate. In this spirit, the Court held a solemn sitting on 17 April 2026 to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of its inaugural session, in the presence of His Majesty the King of the Netherlands, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the former President of the General Assembly and other eminent guests. On the same day, the Court launched the Judicial Fellows Alumni Association, to further consolidate the sense of community and shared experience among current and past participants in the Judicial Fellowship Programme. Let me recall that the purpose of this yearly programme is to give 15 to 16 talented young law graduates from various universities around the world the chance to hone their knowledge and skills at the seat of the Court.

In addition, in honour of the Court's eightieth anniversary, a special illustrated book entitled *The International Court of Justice: 80 Years in the Service of Peace and Justice* was published. I recall that later today, at the Trusteeship Council, a publication entitled *The International Court of Justice at 80: An Inside View* will also be officially launched. This publication provides insights from current and former Members of the Court, judges *ad hoc* and Registry officials into the challenges faced by the Court and its enduring relevance as the forum of choice for the international community to seek peaceful dispute resolution through law. Finally, I should mention that a dedicated photo exhibition has been installed in the Visitors' Lobby of the General Assembly building. This exhibition offers illustrative snapshots of the Court's jurisprudence over the years. Indeed, it has

always been important to the Court, as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, to organize outreach activities both at the Peace Palace in The Hague and at the Organization's headquarters in New York.

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I will now, as is traditional, present a succinct review of the judicial activities of the Court over the past year. States from all four corners of the globe continue to bring a wide variety of legal disputes to the Court. As of 1 August 2025 — the starting date of the period covered by the Court's annual report — there were 25 cases on the Court's docket. Over the course of the year, the number of cases has remained at a record high, with 24 contentious cases currently pending¹. These inter-State disputes cover a wide range of legal issues, such as land and maritime delimitation, human rights, economic relations, immunities, as well as the interpretation and application of treaties dealing with a variety of subjects. Since my address to you last October, one new contentious case has been brought before the Court². On 26 June 2026, the Democratic Republic of the Congo instituted proceedings against Rwanda with regard to a dispute concerning alleged violations of human rights by Rwanda on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo over a period extending from 1996 to the present day.

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¹ *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)* and *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar: 11 States intervening)* (under deliberation); *Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary/Slovakia)*, *Certain Iranian Assets (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America)*, *Alleged Violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America)*, *Relocation of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem (Palestine v. United States of America)*, *Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim (Guatemala/Belize)*, *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan)*, *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Azerbaijan v. Armenia)*, *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*, *Questions of Jurisdictional Immunities of the State and Measures of Constraint against State Owned Property (Germany v. Italy)*, *Request relating to the Return of Property Confiscated in Criminal Proceedings (Equatorial Guinea v. France)*, *Sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes/Cayos Zapotillos (Belize v. Honduras)*, *Application of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Canada and the Netherlands v. Syrian Arab Republic)*, *Alleged Violations of State Immunities (Islamic Republic of Iran v. Canada)*, *Aerial Incident of 8 January 2020 (Canada, Sweden, Ukraine and United Kingdom v. Islamic Republic of Iran)*, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*, *Alleged Breaches of Certain International Obligations in respect of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Nicaragua v. Germany)*, *Embassy of Mexico in Quito (Mexico v. Ecuador)*, *Glas Espinel (Ecuador v. Mexico)*, *Appeal relating to the Jurisdiction of the ICAO Council under Article 84 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Islamic Republic of Iran v. Canada, Sweden, Ukraine and United Kingdom)*, *Alleged Smuggling of Migrants (Lithuania v. Belarus)*, *Appeal from the ICAO Council Decision Dated 30 June 2025 (Russian Federation v. Australia and Netherlands)* and *Alleged Violations of Human Rights by Rwanda on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Rwanda)*.

² *Alleged Violations of Human Rights by Rwanda on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Rwanda)*.

Mr President, since 1 August 2025, the Court has held hearings in five cases³ and has rendered one Judgment on intervention and two Advisory Opinions⁴. In addition, it has issued one Order on a request for the indication of provisional measures⁵ and one Order on the admissibility of counter-claims⁶. It has also rendered a number of Orders on time-limits, as well as an Order on discontinuance⁷. The Court is currently deliberating on the merits of two cases, namely the case concerning *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar: 11 States intervening)* and the case concerning the *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)*, and on the preliminary objections raised in the case concerning *Alleged Breaches of Certain International Obligations in respect of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Nicaragua v. Germany)*.

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As is customary, I will now give a brief account of the judgments and advisory opinions delivered, as well as the substantive orders made during the period under review. I would recall that during my address to the Assembly last October, I previously gave a summary of the Advisory Opinion dated 22 October 2025 on the *Obligations of Israel in relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations, Other International Organizations and Third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. I will therefore begin with the Judgment on intervention rendered on 19 March 2026 in the case concerning *Sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes/Cayos Zapotillos (Belize v. Honduras)*.

This case concerns a small group of maritime features in the Caribbean, known as the Sapodilla Cayes or Cayos Zapotillos. Belize and Honduras are the Parties to the case and each has claimed sovereignty over the cays. Guatemala, which has a separate case pending against Belize concerning territorial issues, including sovereignty over those cays, asked the Court for permission to intervene. In practical terms, Guatemala wished to make sure that its own claimed interests in the cays would not be prejudiced by a judgment in the case between Belize and Honduras.

In its Judgment on Guatemala's Application for permission to intervene, the Court examined Guatemala's request under Article 62 of the Statute and Article 81 of the Court's Rules. Article 62 allows a State which is not a party to a case to request permission to intervene if it considers that it has "an interest of a legal nature which may be affected by the decision in the case". Moreover, as the Court explained, under Article 81 of the Rules, it falls to the State seeking to intervene to set out: *first*, the interest of a legal nature which it considers might be affected by the decision; *second*, the

³ *Right to Strike under ILO Convention No. 87* (advisory opinion) hearings: 6 to 8 October 2025; *Sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes/Cayos Zapotillos (Belize v. Honduras)* (intervention) hearings: 24 to 26 November 2025; *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar: 11 States intervening)* (merits) hearings: 12 to 29 January 2026; *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)* (merits) hearings: 4 to 11 May 2026; *Alleged Breaches of Certain International Obligations in respect of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Nicaragua v. Germany)* (preliminary objections) hearings: 7 to 10 September 2026.

⁴ *Obligations of Israel in relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations, Other International Organizations and Third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, Advisory Opinion of 22 October 2025; *Sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes/Cayos Zapotillos (Belize v. Honduras)*, Judgment on intervention of 19 March 2026 (intervention by Guatemala); *Right to Strike under ILO Convention No. 87*, Advisory Opinion of 21 May 2026.

⁵ *Request relating to the Return of Property Confiscated in Criminal Proceedings (Equatorial Guinea v. France)*, Order of 12 September 2025, rejecting the request for the indication of provisional measures.

⁶ *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*, Counter-Claims, Order of 5 December 2025.

⁷ *Kohler and Paris (France v. Islamic Republic of Iran)*, Order of 19 September 2025.

precise object of its intervention; and *third*, any basis of jurisdiction said to exist as between it and the parties to the case.

On the *first* point, the Court found that Guatemala had identified a sufficiently concrete legal interest. In particular, it noted that the central issue in the proceedings between Belize and Honduras was sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes/Cayos Zapotillos and that Guatemala also claimed an interest in that same territory in its separate case with Belize. The Court therefore considered that a future judgment on sovereignty, and on related fishing rights in the surrounding waters, could affect Guatemala's legal position, even though Guatemala was not a party to the case.

The Court also addressed the argument that Article 59 of the Statute already protects the interests of third States, because a judgment is binding only on the parties to the case. The Court clarified that Article 59 does not render intervention meaningless and deprive Article 62 of the Statute of any useful effect. A judgment may be binding only between the parties, but it can still have practical or legal consequences for a third State's interests. Article 62 exists precisely to give such a State an opportunity to protect those interests before the Court gives its decision.

On the *second* point, regarding the precise object of the intervention, the Court emphasized that intervention is not a way of bringing a new case through the back door. A State that intervenes may not transform the original dispute or introduce a separate dispute between different parties. In this case, however, Guatemala's stated object was limited: it wished to inform the Court of the nature and extent of its claimed legal interest in the Sapodilla Cayes/Cayos Zapotillos and to protect that interest. The Court found that this object was sufficiently connected to the subject of the main dispute and did not amount to a new claim against Belize or Honduras.

Turning to the *third* point, the Court considered whether Guatemala needed to establish a separate jurisdictional link with the Parties to the case. In this regard, it distinguished between intervention as a party and intervention as a non-party. A State that intervenes as a party must establish an autonomous basis of jurisdiction. By contrast, a State that intervenes as a non-party is not required to establish such a jurisdictional link. The Court concluded that Guatemala should be considered as seeking to intervene only as a non-party. The absence of a jurisdictional link between Guatemala and Honduras therefore did not prevent the intervention.

Finally, the Court did not accept Honduras's argument that Guatemala's Application should be rejected since it constituted an abuse of process. In particular, Honduras emphasized the existence of two "parallel" sets of proceedings and contended that Guatemala's Application was contrary to the general principles of procedural law. The Court explained that the authority entrusted to it under Article 62 of its Statute was one of objective assessment. Having found that the conditions laid down in the Statute and the Rules of Court had been met, the Court concluded that it had no discretion to reject Guatemala's Application.

The Court accordingly permitted Guatemala to intervene as a non-party pursuant to Article 62 of the Statute. The intervention was limited to the issue of sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes/Cayos Zapotillos, including fishing rights in the waters surrounding these maritime features. As a result, Guatemala may present its views to the Court on those matters, while the case itself remains one between Belize and Honduras.

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I shall now turn to the Advisory Opinion rendered on 21 May 2026 in the proceedings on the question of the *Right to Strike under ILO Convention No. 87*. By a resolution adopted by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office on 10 November 2023, the Court was asked to

determine whether “the right to strike of workers and their organizations [is] protected under the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)”. The international community expressed much interest in this question, with over 30 participants taking part in the written proceedings⁸, as well as 18 States and 5 international organizations presenting oral statements.

With reference to the rules of interpretation under Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties — a provision understood to reflect customary international law — the Court began by addressing the ordinary meaning to be given to the terms of Convention No. 87⁹. It first observed that Convention No. 87 does not contain an explicit reference to the right to strike. However, in the Court’s view, the absence of an express treaty provision governing a certain issue did not necessarily mean that the issue was excluded from that treaty.

The Court then recalled that Article 2 of Convention No. 87 provides that “[w]orkers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organisation concerned, to join organisations of their own choosing”. Article 3, paragraph 1, further provides that “[w]orkers’ and employers’ organisations shall have the right to draw up their constitutions and rules, to elect their representatives in full freedom, to organise their administration and activities and to formulate their programmes”. The Court considered that the wording of this provision indicates ways in which the rights accorded to workers’ and employers’ organizations are exercised. This includes not only internal negotiation and adoption of constitutions and rules, and the election of representatives, but also broader powers enabling workers’ and employers’ organizations to decide on matters relating to their administration, as well as to activities to be performed and programmes to be formulated and implemented in both internal and external contexts. The Court further noted that Article 10 of Convention No. 87 defines the term “organisation” as “any organisation of workers or of employers for furthering and defending the interests of workers or of employers”.

In the Court’s opinion, a reading of these three provisions together, in good faith and in accordance with their ordinary meaning, suggests that, under Convention No. 87, workers and employers have the right to create and join organizations for the purpose of furthering and defending their respective interests, including to organize their activities and programmes to pursue that purpose. The Court noted that Convention No. 87 does not include definitions of the terms “activities” and “programmes”, both of which are referred to in Article 3, paragraph 1. The ordinary meaning of the term “activities”, which generally encompasses any action taken to pursue an objective, and of the term “programmes”, which generally means a set of planned actions pursued to achieve a result, is broad and encompasses the various dimensions of the activities and programmes of workers’ organizations. The term “strike” generally means an activity consisting of a temporary work stoppage or slowdown wilfully effected by one or more groups of workers with a view to enforcing or resisting demands or expressing or supporting grievances. Consequently, the Court considered that when Article 3, paragraph 1, is read in conjunction with Articles 2 and 10 of the Convention, it suggests that strike action is capable of falling within the ordinary meaning of the term “activities” and, thus, within the scope of Convention No. 87.

The Court next considered whether the object and purpose of Convention No. 87 reinforced that reading. Observing that the stated aim of the Convention was to guarantee freedom of association as a means of improving labour conditions and achieving sustained progress, the Court noted that strike action was one of the main activities engaged in and tools used by workers and their organizations to that end.

⁸ 31 written statements; 15 written comments; 18 States and 5 international organizations making oral statements.

⁹ It is recalled that subparagraph 1 of Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states that “[a] treaty shall be interpreted in good faith in accordance with the ordinary meaning to be given to the terms of the treaty in their context and in the light of its object and purpose”.

The Court concluded from the foregoing analysis that the ordinary meaning of the relevant terms of the Convention, read in good faith, in their context and in light of the object and purpose of the treaty, indicates that protection of the right to strike is encompassed in the protection of the freedom of association provided for in Convention No. 87.

The Court then considered whether there was any subsequent practice¹⁰ establishing the agreement of the parties regarding its interpretation. In this context, the Court noted that the ILO supervisory bodies, namely the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations and the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards, had progressively recognized the right to strike as being protected under Convention No. 87. The Court sought to determine whether the interpretations adopted by the ILO supervisory bodies had elicited any relevant reactions from the States parties to Convention No. 87 and whether such reactions established the agreement of the parties. In the Court's view, the fact that a number of States parties had expressed clear opposition to the interpretation according to which Convention No. 87 protects the right to strike precluded the conclusion that there exists subsequent practice which establishes the agreement of the parties on this point.

The next step in the Court's interpretative process was to take into account any relevant rules of international law applicable in the relations between the parties to Convention No. 87¹¹. The Court clarified that such rules do not necessarily have to be binding on all parties to the treaty under interpretation in order to be taken into account. It would suffice for a rule to express the common understanding of the parties regarding certain provisions of that treaty. In this connection, the Court focused on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which include provisions covering the right to strike, observing that there was a high degree of overlap between the States parties to Convention No. 87 and the States parties to both 1966 Covenants. With regard to the handful of non-parties to either Covenant, the Court noted that the conduct of the States concerned appeared to align with the position under these instruments regarding the right to strike. The Court further noted that, with respect to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in particular, no relevant reservations or objections had been made by the parties to the Covenant concerning its provision on the right to strike. The Court concluded that an interpretation taking into account the relevant rules of international law contained in the two 1966 Covenants indicated that the protection of the right to strike is encompassed in the protection of the freedom of association guaranteed by Convention No. 87.

Finally, the Court took into account the supplementary means of interpretation provided for in Article 32 of the Vienna Convention in order to confirm the meaning resulting from the application of Article 31. It examined the *travaux préparatoires* of Convention No. 87, the subsequent practice of the parties, the pronouncements of the ILO supervisory bodies, and the relevant regional instruments and related jurisprudence of regional courts, as well as pronouncements by other regional bodies. The Court considered that, with the exception of the *travaux préparatoires* of Convention No. 87, whose examination led to an inconclusive result, the supplementary means of interpretation taken into consideration by the Court in accordance with Article 32 of the Vienna Convention confirmed the conclusion reached by it through its interpretation based on Article 31, namely that the right to strike is protected under Convention No. 87.

In conclusion, the Court answered the question put to it by the International Labour Office in the affirmative: the right to strike is protected under Convention No. 87. It added the caveat that this

¹⁰ It is recalled that subparagraph 3 (b) of Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states that "[t]here shall be taken into account, together with the context[, a]ny subsequent practice in the application of the treaty which establishes the agreement of the parties regarding its interpretation".

¹¹ It is recalled that subparagraph 3 (c) of Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states that "[t]here shall be taken into account, together with the context[, a]ny relevant rule of international law applicable in the relations between the parties".

finding does not entail any determination on the precise content, scope or conditions for the exercise of that right.

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As I mentioned earlier, in addition to these rulings, the Court rendered two substantive Orders. During my speech to you last autumn, I had the opportunity to provide a summary of the first of these decisions, namely the Order dated 12 September 2025 in the case concerning *Request relating to the Return of Property Confiscated in Criminal Proceedings (Equatorial Guinea v. France)*, in which the Applicant's request for the indication of provisional measures was rejected.

The second decision relates to the case concerning *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*. In particular, by an Order dated 5 December 2025, the Court considered the admissibility of the counter-claims made by the Russian Federation in the case.

The Court began by noting that under Article 80, paragraph 1, of its Rules, it may entertain a counter-claim only if two requirements are met, namely that the counter-claim "comes within the jurisdiction of the Court" and that it "is directly connected with the subject-matter of the claim of the other party".

With regard to jurisdiction, the Court recalled that its jurisdiction in the case was founded on Article IX of the Genocide Convention. It observed that, in order to establish whether counter-claims came within its jurisdiction, it needed to examine whether the conditions set out in that provision had been satisfied. The Court further recalled that, in its Judgment of 2 February 2024 on the preliminary objections raised by the Respondent, it concluded that it had jurisdiction, on the basis of Article IX of the Genocide Convention, to entertain one of Ukraine's submissions, namely the request that the Court "[a]djudge and declare that there is no credible evidence that Ukraine is responsible for committing genocide . . . in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine". In its Order of 5 December 2025, the Court noted that the Russian Federation also relied on Article IX of the Genocide Convention to found the Court's jurisdiction in respect of its counter-claims, in which it alleged that Ukraine had violated its obligations under Articles I, III, IV, V and VI of the Convention. Ukraine denied these allegations. The Court considered that there exists a dispute between the Parties as to whether Ukraine has violated its obligations under the said provisions. This dispute concerns the interpretation, application or fulfilment of the Genocide Convention. The Court thus concluded that the Russian Federation's counter-claims came within its jurisdiction under Article IX of the Convention.

Regarding the requirement of a direct connection between a counter-claim and the principal claim, the Court recalled that, in its previous decisions, it had taken into consideration a range of factors that could establish a direct connection in fact and in law between a counter-claim and the principal claim. With respect to the question of connection in fact, the Court considered that the Parties' respective claims related to the same factual complex and that there was a direct connection in fact between them. The Court noted that the Russian Federation intended to rely, for the most part, on the same evidence in order both to refute Ukraine's claim and to substantiate its own counter-claims. With respect to the question of connection in law, the Court noted that both Parties relied, in their respective claims, on the same instrument, the Genocide Convention. The Court recalled that the specific provisions or legal principles invoked by each party need not be identical in order for the requirement of a direct connection in law to be satisfied. Further, the Court considered that the Applicant and the Respondent pursued the same legal aim, namely to establish whether Ukraine is responsible for violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention. The fact that the Applicant sought primarily a declaratory judgment, while the Respondent invoked Ukraine's

international responsibility for the violation of various provisions of the Genocide Convention, did not alter this conclusion. Accordingly, the Court concluded that the Russian Federation's counter-claims were admissible as such.

Ukraine argued that even if the Russian Federation's counter-claims could satisfy the requirements for admissibility, the Court should nevertheless refuse to entertain them in what it described as the "exceptional circumstances" of the case before the Court. The Russian Federation, for its part, contended that the Court did not have discretion to decline to entertain a counter-claim that was admissible as such. The Court considered that, in the circumstances of the case, the sound administration of justice and the interests of procedural economy called for the simultaneous consideration of the counter-claims and the principal claim.

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Mr President,

I would also like to inform the General Assembly that the Court has recently adopted amendments to Articles 50 and 56 of its Rules and to several of its Practice Directions concerning the submission of documents in proceedings before the Court.

The Court takes every care to periodically review its existing rules and practices, and the present amendments aim at clarifying the framework governing the treatment of evidence. In particular, the widespread availability of documents online had made it increasingly difficult to apply the existing distinction between documents produced as annexes and publications considered "readily available", to which parties could refer in the oral proceedings even though they had not been annexed to their written pleadings or otherwise produced. This raised questions as to which documents actually formed part of the case file and could properly be relied upon by the parties. At the same time, the Court has sought to address the increasing volume of annexes submitted with written pleadings.

The category of "readily available" publications has been removed, so that, under the new version of these provisions, it is made clear that documents relied upon as evidence must be annexed to the written pleadings or otherwise produced in accordance with the Rules. The revised Practice Directions also clarify that the 750-page limit on annexes applies to the total number of pages of annexes submitted by a party in a particular phase of the proceedings. Finally, the Court has modernized the arrangements for making written statements and documents submitted by international non-governmental organizations in advisory proceedings accessible to participating States and international organizations by creating an electronic portal for that purpose.

The amendments will enter into force on 1 February 2027. For pending contentious cases, transitional provisions will apply.

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Before concluding my report, I would like to update the General Assembly on a few additional matters. The first topic I would like to touch upon is the Trust Fund for the Court's Judicial Fellowship Programme. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, every year, the Court welcomes a cohort of judicial fellows to the Peace Palace in The Hague. This highly competitive programme aims to give promising young jurists the opportunity to spend the best part of a year working

alongside Members of the Court, with a view to providing professional training to the next generation of experts in international law. I would further recall that the Trust Fund was established in 2021 by the Secretary-General at the request of the General Assembly, in an effort to ensure that the programme is accessible to participants from as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. As you are aware, the purpose of the Fund is to grant fellowship awards to selected candidates who are nationals of developing countries and are studying at universities in those countries. On average, the Fund has sponsored three to four judicial fellows each year since its inception. Thanks to this initiative and to the generosity of donors, the Trust Fund has enabled the participation of a total of 19 fellows to date, nominated by universities in the following countries: Brazil, Chile, Congo, Eritrea, Georgia, Guatemala, India, Iran, Kenya, Mexico, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Türkiye. We have every confidence that this valuable scheme will continue to go from strength to strength.

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Next, I would like to share with you the latest developments concerning the asbestos-related situation at the Peace Palace, the iconic building that houses the Court. As noted in my speech last autumn, following the discovery of asbestos in 2016, the Dutch authorities have sought to identify an appropriate and effective way to address this potential health hazard. In particular, in 2022, the host country proposed a two-phase plan. The first phase would consist of “project A”, the removal of asbestos from areas where it is known to be present, and “project B”, the conduct of a thorough survey to locate any other areas where asbestos might be found. The second phase would entail the implementation of an action plan to be determined in light of the survey’s findings.

In February 2025, a Supplemental Implementation Agreement was concluded between the Court, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Carnegie Foundation and the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Following the conclusion of this agreement, the Court approved the first phase of the asbestos-removal and remediation plan. “Project B” — the survey of areas where asbestos may be present — was completed in the last quarter of 2025, while “Project A” — the removal of asbestos from the attic — remains under way and is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2027.

In September 2025, the Dutch authorities announced the start of the preparatory phase for the Peace Palace renovation project. According to the provisional timeline communicated by the host State, this phase is scheduled to run from 2026 to 2029, followed by the implementation phase beginning in 2030. Consultations are currently under way between the host State, the Carnegie Foundation, the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the Court regarding the governance structure and organizational arrangements for the renovation project. Above all, the Court’s priority is to ensure that judges and staff members are able to work in a safe environment and to minimize any disruption to the Court’s judicial activities. The Court has also taken the opportunity to emphasize the need for additional office space to accommodate Registry staff as well as the need to modernize the interior of the historic Peace Palace premises.

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Mr President,

I would also like to briefly mention the budgetary situation of the Court, to which, Mr President, you referred in your opening statement. Let me start by reiterating the Court’s deep appreciation to the General Assembly for approving an increase in our resources in recent years,

which has allowed for the creation of vital posts in the Registry. In its budget request for 2027, however, the Court has placed emphasis on improving its efficiency through technology. In particular, the budget proposal provides for the implementation of a case management system, which is essential for the Court to manage its growing volume of case-related documentation in a secure, efficient and systematic manner. This system will provide a single integrated platform allowing for the electronic filing, distribution and retrieval of case-related materials. The Court trusts that Member States will support this forward-looking budget proposal, aimed at harnessing the advantages of new technologies with a view to streamlining the Court's judicial procedures.

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Mr President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

That concludes my remarks. I thank you for your attention and wish this eighty-first session of the General Assembly every success.
