



# INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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## Press Release

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### **The President of the International Court of Justice, H.E. Judge Joan E. Donoghue, addresses the United Nations General Assembly**

THE HAGUE, 28 October 2021. H.E. Judge Joan E. Donoghue, President of the International Court of Justice, addressed the United Nations General Assembly today on the occasion of the presentation of the Court's Annual Report for the judicial year 2020-2021.

President Donoghue, who delivered her speech in person in New York, began by paying tribute, on behalf of the ICJ, to the late Judge James Richard Crawford, a former Member of the Court who passed away on 31 May 2021.

The President then gave an overview of the Court's judicial activities, noting that the Court's docket remained full, with 15 contentious cases currently pending before it "involving States from all regions of the world and touching on a wide range of issues, including territorial and maritime delimitation, the status of international watercourses, reparations for internationally wrongful acts, and alleged violations of bilateral and multilateral treaties concerning, among other things, diplomatic relations, the elimination of racial discrimination, the prevention of genocide and the suppression of terrorism financing".

She stated that the Court had been seised of three new contentious cases since 1 August 2020, the starting date of the period covered by the Report, and that the Court had held hybrid hearings in nine cases and delivered five judgments during the same period. She added that there were currently four cases under deliberation.

After giving a brief summary of the five judgments delivered by the Court, the President spoke about the Court's approach to preliminary questions of jurisdiction and admissibility, observing that the Court took "great care in assessing the question whether it ha[d] jurisdiction in a given case", a matter she described as requiring "careful attention in many . . . cases, as illustrated by those that [had been] active in the period under review". She expressed the hope that "the ICJ's attention . . . to the complex jurisdictional issues that may arise in proceedings before it, together with the high quality of the Court's judgments and the fairness and transparency of its procedures, [would] contribute to maintaining and enhancing Member States' confidence in the Court".

Addressing recent non-judicial matters, the President mentioned the new Article 11 of the Resolution concerning the Internal Judicial Practice of the Court, adopted in December 2020, which "provides for the possibility for the Court to establish an *ad hoc* committee, composed of

three judges, to assist it in monitoring the implementation of the provisional measures that it indicates”.

She also referred to the amendment to Practice Direction III of the Court, which limits the number of pages that may be included in annexes attached by a party to its written pleadings, “unless the Court decides, upon request of a party, that the limit can be exceeded in light of the particular circumstances of the case”.

The President then turned to the Trust Fund for the Court’s Judicial Fellowship Programme, noting that the Court was “delighted that the General Assembly ha[d] given its full support to this initiative, adopting resolution 75/129 of 14 December 2020, in which it requested the Secretary-General to establish and administer the Trust Fund”. She observed that this Fund, which was formally established on 16 April 2021, was “now open to States, international financial institutions, donor agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and natural and juridical persons to make voluntary financial contributions to ensure the success of the scheme”. She informed the audience that donations had already been made by a few States and expressed the hope that other interested parties would follow, stressing that now that resources had begun to be mobilized, the Court was “hopeful that, for next year’s Programme, starting in the fall of 2022, the cohort of judicial fellows [would] include one or more talented young law graduates who [were] eligible to benefit from the Trust Fund”.

Having touched on the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, President Donoghue told the General Assembly how the Court had adapted to circumstances by holding its public sittings, deliberations and other private meetings largely in a hybrid format and amending its Rules to clarify that hearings and readings of the Court’s judgments could take place by video link whenever necessary for health, security or other compelling reasons. She noted that the Court was looking forward, “once the pandemic-related developments [would] allow, to resuming its work in the traditional manner” and emphasized the importance of the ICJ’s hearings “being held in the formal and solemn setting of the Great Hall of Justice in the Peace Palace, in the presence of the parties and the public”.



*Photograph: H.E. Judge Joan E. Donoghue, President of the International Court of Justice, addresses the United Nations General Assembly on 28 October 2021 (UN Photo/Loey Felipe).*

The [full text](#) of the address by the President of the Court to the United Nations General Assembly, as well as the Court's [Report](#) for the judicial year 2020-2021, are available on the Court's website.

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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 (Netherlands). The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, through judgments which have binding force and are without appeal for the parties concerned, legal disputes submitted to it by States; and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and agencies of the system.

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