

**SPEECH BY H.E. MR. RONNY ABRAHAM, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF
JUSTICE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

27 October 2016

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the General Assembly for continuing the practice of allowing the President of the International Court of Justice to present the judicial activity of the Court over the previous year, a practice which reflects the interest which this august Assembly displays in the Court and of the support which it provides for it.

Before informing you about the work of the Court during the last 12 months, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson on his election to the presidency of the Seventy-first Session of the United Nations General Assembly; may I wish him every success in carrying out this distinguished role.

Between 1 August 2015 — the starting date of the period covered by the Court's report — and today, up to 15 contentious cases have been pending before the Court, and hearings have been held in seven of them. The Court first heard the oral argument of the Parties on the preliminary objections raised by the Respondent in the two cases introduced by Nicaragua against Colombia concerning, on the one hand, *Alleged Violations of Sovereign Rights and Maritime Spaces in the Caribbean Sea* and, on the other hand, the *Question of the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf between Nicaragua and Colombia beyond 200 nautical miles from the Nicaraguan Coast*. It then held hearings on the questions of jurisdiction and admissibility raised in the cases of the *Obligations concerning Negotiations relating to Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and to Nuclear Disarmament (Marshall Islands v. India)*, *(Marshall Islands v. Pakistan)* and *(Marshall Islands v. United Kingdom)*. The Court also heard the oral argument of the Parties, a few weeks ago, on the preliminary objections filed by Kenya in the case between Somalia and Kenya concerning *Maritime Delimitation in the Indian Ocean*. That case is currently under deliberation. Finally, last week, between 17 and 19 October, the Court held hearings on a request for the indication of provisional measures submitted to it by Equatorial Guinea in the case concerning *Immunities and Criminal Proceedings (Equatorial Guinea v. France)*, which was introduced by an Application of 13 June 2016. The Court will shortly render its decision on this request.

Since 1 August 2015, the Court has also delivered seven Judgments. One of these Judgments dealt with the merits of the joined cases concerning *Certain Activities carried out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua)* and *Construction of a Road in Costa Rica along the San Juan River (Nicaragua v. Costa Rica)*, while the other six settled preliminary questions relating to the jurisdiction of the Court and the admissibility of certain claims.

Lastly, it should be noted that the Court also decided, for the first time in many years, to arrange for an expert opinion in one of the cases pending before it: the case between Costa Rica and Nicaragua concerning *Maritime Delimitation in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean*. It did so by an Order dated 31 May 2016.

*

I now propose to give you a brief account, in the usual way, of the substance of those decisions. I shall deal first with certain aspects of the Judgment rendered on the merits of the claims of Costa Rica and Nicaragua in the two joined cases concerning *Certain Activities carried out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua)* and *Construction of a Road in Costa Rica along the San Juan River (Nicaragua v. Costa Rica)*, respectively.

In its Judgment of 16 December 2015, the Court first addressed the matters in dispute in the first of these two cases. I would recall that the proceedings were brought in late 2010 by Costa Rica, which complained in particular that Nicaragua had invaded and occupied what it claimed to be Costa Rican territory; that it had dug a channel thereon; that it had conducted works, notably dredging of the San Juan River, in violation of its international obligations; that it had breached the provisional measures indicated by the Court in the case in 2011 and 2013; and, finally, that it had breached Costa Rica's rights of navigation on the San Juan River.

In order to settle the dispute before it, the Court first dealt with the question of which of the two States had sovereignty over the disputed territory. To do so, the Court considered the Treaty of Limits by which the Parties had fixed the course of their land boundary in 1858, as well as a number of arbitral awards in which two arbitrators had given their interpretation of certain disputed points in relation to the Treaty of Limits. The Court concluded from its analysis of these instruments that sovereignty over the territory in dispute in the case belonged to Costa Rica. It therefore found that the activities carried out by Nicaragua in that territory since 2010 were in breach of Costa Rica's territorial sovereignty, and that Nicaragua was obliged to make reparation for the damage caused.

The Court then turned to the question of whether, through its activities on its own territory, in particular in the San Juan River, Nicaragua had violated obligations incumbent upon it under international environmental law. It considered first the question of compliance with procedural obligations which had allegedly been breached, those obligations being of both a customary and a conventional nature. The Court found that the activities carried out by Nicaragua were not such as to give rise to a risk of significant transboundary harm and that the Respondent was thus not under an obligation to carry out an environmental impact assessment, or to notify and consult with the Applicant in that regard. The Court further stated that it was not convinced that Nicaragua had breached any obligation to notify and consult contained in international conventions, as was alleged in the case by Costa Rica. It therefore concluded that Nicaragua had not violated obligations of a procedural nature. Secondly, with respect to substantive obligations, the Court concluded that the available evidence did not show that Nicaragua had caused prejudice to the territory of Costa Rica or breached its obligations concerning prevention of transboundary harm by engaging in dredging activities in the Lower San Juan River.

The Court continued its analysis by examining whether Nicaragua had breached its obligations under the Orders indicating provisional measures made in the same case. Indeed, by an Order of 8 March 2011, the Court had ordered a number of provisional measures in this case, the binding nature of which was not in dispute — I would recall that the Court stated in its *LaGrand* Judgment rendered on 27 June 2001 that such measures are binding on the Parties. On the basis of the facts presented to it, which were uncontested between the Parties, the Court found that Nicaragua had breached its obligations under the 2011 Order.

The Court next addressed Costa Rica's allegations that Nicaragua had committed a number of breaches of its navigational rights on the San Juan River. Finding that Nicaragua had not provided a convincing justification for the conduct of its authorities in incidents concerning navigation by inhabitants of the Costa Rican bank of the river, the Court concluded that Nicaragua had breached Costa Rica's navigational rights on the San Juan River pursuant to the 1858 Treaty of Limits.

Concerning the reparation requested by Costa Rica, the Court held that the declaration that Nicaragua had breached the territorial sovereignty of Costa Rica by excavating three *caños* and establishing a military presence in the disputed territory provided adequate satisfaction for the non-material injury suffered on that account; the same applied to the declaration of the breach of the obligations under the Court's Order of 8 March 2011 on provisional measures, and to the declaration of the breach of Costa Rica's navigational rights. The Court further considered that Costa Rica was entitled to receive compensation for the material damage caused by Nicaraguan breaches. It stated that the Parties should engage in negotiation in order to reach an agreement on this issue. However, if the Parties failed to reach such an agreement within 12 months of the date of its Judgment, the Court itself would, at the request of either Party, determine the amount of compensation.

Having examined the *Costa Rica v. Nicaragua* case, the Court turned secondly to the matters in dispute in the *Nicaragua v. Costa Rica* case. I would recall in this respect that the proceedings had been instituted by Nicaragua against Costa Rica on 22 December 2011, the Applicant alleging "violations of Nicaraguan sovereignty and major environmental damages to its territory". Nicaragua contended in particular that Costa Rica was carrying out major road construction works in the border area between the two countries, along the San Juan River, in breach of a number of international obligations and with grave environmental consequences for Nicaragua.

The Court therefore examined whether Costa Rica had breached procedural or substantive obligations in respect of environmental protection. With regard to the procedural obligations, the Court first considered the alleged breach of the obligation to carry out an environmental impact assessment. It found that the construction of the road by Costa Rica carried a risk of significant transboundary harm: therefore, the threshold for triggering the obligation to evaluate the environmental impact of the road project had been met. Finding also that Costa Rica had, in any event, not shown the claimed existence of an emergency that would, in its view, have justified constructing the road without undertaking an environmental impact assessment, the Court then considered whether Costa Rica had complied, in the circumstances of the case, with its obligation to carry out such an assessment. It observed that this required an *ex ante* evaluation of the risk of significant transboundary harm — that is to say, before the implementation of the project — whereas the studies carried out by Costa Rica were *post hoc* assessments which evaluated the environmental impact of stretches of the road already built, and not the risk of future harm. The Court thus concluded that Costa Rica had not complied with its obligation under general international law to carry out an environmental impact assessment concerning the construction of the road. In view of that conclusion, the Court considered that it need not determine whether Costa Rica was required under general international law to notify, and consult with, Nicaragua prior to carrying out the works. It also found that it was not established that Costa Rica had violated any obligation to notify or consult pursuant to the treaties invoked by Nicaragua.

The Court went on to consider the alleged breaches of substantive obligations incumbent upon Costa Rica under international environmental law. After examining the relevant evidence, the Court found that Nicaragua had not proved that the construction of the road had actually caused significant transboundary harm and therefore rejected Nicaragua's claim that Costa Rica had violated its substantive obligations under international law regarding transboundary harm. The Court also rejected the rest of Nicaragua's submissions concerning Costa Rica's alleged violations of substantive obligations contained in various treaties, Nicaragua having failed to demonstrate that Costa Rica had disregarded the texts in question.

Lastly, the Court considered Nicaragua's claim that the dumping of sediment due to the construction of the road and the creation of sediment deltas in the river constituted a violation of its territorial integrity and sovereignty over the San Juan River. It found this claim unconvincing, observing that Costa Rica did not exercise any authority on Nicaragua's territory, including the river, and did not carry out any activity thereon. It therefore dismissed Nicaragua's claim in this respect.

With regard to the reparation requested by Nicaragua, the Court concluded that a declaration of wrongful conduct in respect of Costa Rica's violation of the obligation to conduct an environmental impact assessment was the appropriate measure of satisfaction.

*

During the period under review, the Court also delivered, as I mentioned in my introduction, six Judgments on preliminary objections relating either to jurisdiction or admissibility. On 24 September 2015, it handed down a Judgment by which it rejected the preliminary objection to jurisdiction raised by Chile in the case concerning *Obligation to Negotiate Access to the Pacific Ocean (Bolivia v. Chile)*. Having presented that Judgment in the address which I had the honour to give last year to this Assembly, I shall not go back over that decision. I shall therefore begin by recalling certain elements of the Judgments rendered by the Court on 17 March 2016 in two cases brought by Nicaragua against Colombia, namely the case concerning the *Question of the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf between Nicaragua and Colombia beyond 200 nautical miles from the Nicaraguan Coast* and that concerning *Alleged Violations of Sovereign Rights and Maritime Spaces in the Caribbean Sea*.

The first of these two cases was introduced in September 2013 and concerned a "dispute [relating to] the delimitation of the boundaries between, on the one hand, the continental shelf of Nicaragua beyond the 200-nautical-mile limit from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea of Nicaragua is measured, and on the other hand, the continental shelf of Colombia". Colombia then raised preliminary objections, the first of which concerned the Court's jurisdiction *ratione temporis*. According to its Application, Nicaragua sought to found the Court's jurisdiction on Article XXXI of the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement signed on 30 April 1948, also known as the "Pact of Bogotá". However, having denounced the Pact on 27 November 2012, Colombia maintained that the Court had no jurisdiction over the proceedings since they had been instituted on 16 September 2013.

In its Judgment, the Court recalled that the date at which its jurisdiction has to be established is the date on which the application is filed. Under Article XXXI of the Pact of Bogotá, the Parties recognize as compulsory the jurisdiction of the Court, "so long as the [said] Treaty is in force". The first paragraph of Article LVI provides that, following the denunciation of the Pact by a State party, the Pact shall remain in force between the denouncing State and the other parties for a period of one year following the notification of denunciation. The Court noted that Nicaragua's Application had been filed after Colombia had given notice of denunciation, but before the one-year period referred to in the first paragraph of Article LVI. The only question raised by Colombia's first preliminary objection, therefore, was whether an *a contrario* interpretation could be applied to the second paragraph of Article LVI, which states that "[t]he denunciation shall have no effect with respect to pending procedures initiated prior to the transmission of the particular notification"; an affirmative response to this question would have led the Court to declare that it lacked jurisdiction in respect of the proceedings, notwithstanding that those proceedings had been instituted while the Pact was still in force between the Parties. After examining the provisions of the Pact, the Court found that the answer to this question was no. It therefore rejected Colombia's first preliminary objection.

The Court also considered two further objections to jurisdiction, both of which were rejected. It found that, contrary to Colombia's assertions, it had not taken a decision on whether or not Nicaragua had an entitlement to a continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from its coast in its 2012 Judgment between the same Parties, and that, consequently, it was not precluded by the *res judicata* principle from ruling on the Application submitted by Nicaragua in September 2013.

The Court also took the view that Nicaragua was not requesting the Court to revise the 2012 Judgment, nor framing its Application as an “appeal” against that Judgment, as Colombia argued was the case.

Further, the Court ruled on an objection concerning the admissibility of Nicaragua’s requests. Colombia first asserted that Nicaragua’s request regarding the course of the maritime boundary between Nicaragua and Colombia in the areas of the continental shelf which appertain to each of them beyond the boundaries determined by the Court in its 2012 Judgment was inadmissible due to the fact that Nicaragua had not secured the requisite recommendation on the establishment of the outer limits of its continental shelf from the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. The Court considered that, since the delimitation of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles can be undertaken independently of a recommendation from the CLCS, the latter is not a prerequisite that needs to be satisfied by a State party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea before it can ask the Court to settle a dispute with another State over such a delimitation. It therefore rejected the objection.

Colombia then argued that Nicaragua’s request, whereby it asked the Court to establish the principles and rules of international law determining the rights and duties of the two States in relation to the area of overlapping continental shelf claims, pending the delimitation of the maritime boundary between them beyond 200 nautical miles from Nicaragua’s coast, concerned a non-existent dispute and was inadmissible. The Court observed that this request did not relate to an actual dispute between the Parties, nor did it specify what exactly the Court was being asked to decide; it therefore upheld Colombia’s objection.

The proceedings on the merits have thus been resumed, and the Court, by an Order of 28 April 2016, fixed the time-limits for the filing of a Memorial by Nicaragua and a Counter-Memorial by Colombia on the questions raised by the first request put forward by Nicaragua in its Application.

As I have mentioned, the Court delivered a second Judgment on 17 March 2016, in the case concerning *Alleged Violations of Sovereign Rights and Maritime Spaces in the Caribbean Sea (Nicaragua v. Colombia)*. In this case, Nicaragua’s Application was filed on 26 November 2013, this time in respect of a dispute concerning “violations of Nicaragua’s sovereign rights and maritime zones declared by the Court’s Judgment of 19 November 2012 [in the case concerning the *Territorial and Maritime Dispute (Nicaragua v. Colombia)*] and the threat of the use of force by Colombia in order to implement these violations”. Colombia raised preliminary objections in this case. The first of those objections was the same as that raised in the case I have just described and related to the Court’s jurisdiction *ratione temporis*; that objection was rejected for the same reasons that I set out earlier.

In its second objection, Colombia argued that the Court did not have jurisdiction because there was no dispute between the Parties on the date the Application was filed. The Court recalled in this connection that Nicaragua was making two distinct claims — one that Colombia had violated Nicaragua’s sovereign rights and its maritime zones, and the other that Colombia had breached its obligation not to use or threaten to use force. After examining the evidence that had been submitted to it, the Court found that, at the time Nicaragua filed its Application, there existed a dispute concerning the alleged violations by Colombia of Nicaragua’s rights in the maritime zones which, according to Nicaragua, the Court declared in its 2012 Judgment appertain to Nicaragua. It thus rejected the objection raised by Colombia regarding the absence of a dispute in respect of that first claim. By contrast, the Court considered that, on the date of filing of the Application, there was no dispute concerning Nicaragua’s second claim and thus upheld the objection raised by Colombia in this regard.

In its third objection, Colombia contended that the Court also lacked jurisdiction under the Pact of Bogotá, because, at the time of the filing of the Application, the Parties were not of the opinion that the purported controversy “[could not] be settled by direct negotiations through the usual diplomatic channels”. However, having examined the evidence, the Court concluded that, at the date of Nicaragua’s filing of the Application, neither Party could plausibly maintain that the dispute between them could be settled by direct negotiations. Colombia’s third preliminary objection was thus rejected, along with its fifth, according to which, the Court had no jurisdiction with regard to compliance with a prior judgment. The Court observed that the said objection rested on the premise that the Court was being asked to enforce its 2012 Judgment. However, it noted, Nicaragua does not seek to enforce the 2012 Judgment as such.

Finally, the Court did not have to rule upon the fourth objection, which concerned another basis for jurisdiction invoked by Nicaragua as an alternative ground, and the examination of which was unnecessary.

The proceedings on the merits have thus been resumed in respect of the first claim put forward by Nicaragua in its Application, and the Court, by an Order of 17 March 2016, fixed the time-limit for the filing of a Counter-Memorial by Colombia.

*

I shall now briefly present the three Judgments rendered by the Court on 5 October this year in the cases of Obligations concerning Negotiations relating to Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and to Nuclear Disarmament (Marshall Islands v. India), (Marshall Islands v. Pakistan) and (Marshall Islands v. United Kingdom). I will do so in the other official language of the Court.

I would recall that, on 24 April 2014, the Marshall Islands filed in the Registry of the Court Applications instituting proceedings against India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom, alleging the failure of those States to fulfil their obligations concerning negotiations relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament. The Respondents subsequently raised preliminary objections to the jurisdiction of the Court and to the admissibility of the Applications, arguing, in particular, that the Court lacked jurisdiction on the grounds that there was no dispute between the Parties at the time the Applications were filed. In its Judgments the Court began by examining this objection.

The Court observed that the existence of a dispute between the Parties was a condition of its jurisdiction. In order for a dispute to exist, it must be shown that the claim of one party is positively opposed by the other; the two sides must hold clearly opposite views concerning the question of the performance or non-performance of certain international obligations. In order to demonstrate this, the evidence must show that the respondent was aware, or could not have been unaware, that its views were positively opposed by the applicant. These conditions must in principle be met on the date of the filing of the Application: although the Parties’ conduct during the proceedings may be relevant for various purposes — notably in clarifying the subject-matter of the dispute — it is not sufficient to establish the existence of a dispute between them.

In its Judgments, the Court considered whether, as the Marshall Islands’ claimed, statements made by the latter in multilateral fora before the date of the filing of the Applications could lead to the conclusion that there was a dispute between it and each Respondent. The Court concluded in the three cases that, on the basis of those statements — whether taken individually or together — it could not be said that the Respondents were aware, or could not have been unaware, that the Marshall Islands was making an allegation that they were in breach of their obligations. Those statements were thus insufficient to bring into existence a legal dispute between the Parties. It also found that, in this context, the conduct of the Respondents did not allow for the conclusion that a dispute existed.

Lastly, I would mention one final aspect of those decisions, which is of particular interest. In its Judgments, the Court stated that considerable care was required before inferring from votes cast on resolutions before political organs such as the General Assembly conclusions as to the existence or not of a legal dispute on some issue covered by such resolutions. The wording of a resolution, and votes or patterns of voting on resolutions of the same subject-matter, may constitute relevant evidence of the existence of a dispute in some circumstances, particularly where statements were made by way of explanation of vote. However, some resolutions contain a large number of different propositions; a State's vote on such resolutions cannot by itself be taken as indicative of the position of that State on each and every proposition within that resolution, let alone of the existence of a legal dispute between that State and another State regarding one of those propositions.

The Court concluded in all three Judgments that the objection to jurisdiction raised by the Respondents and based on the absence of a dispute between the Parties had to be upheld. It therefore found no need to consider the other objections raised by the Respondents. Since the Court lacked jurisdiction, it could not proceed to the merits of the cases.

*

I have thus described the substance of the Judgments rendered by the Court during the past year. Before outlining the new cases brought before it in the course of the same period, I shall briefly discuss the Order dated 31 May 2016, whereby the Court decided to arrange for an expert opinion in the case concerning *Maritime Delimitation in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua)*. In that case, the Court was of the view that there were certain factual matters relating to the state of the coast between the point suggested by Costa Rica and the point suggested by Nicaragua in their pleadings as the starting-point of their maritime boundary in the Caribbean Sea that could be relevant for the purpose of settling the dispute submitted to it. The Court considered that, with regard to such matters, it would benefit from an expert opinion and, as a result, two experts in geomorphology have since been appointed to fulfil that mission, which will require them to conduct two site visits and to draw up a report which will be communicated to the Court and the Parties before the holding of hearings in the case. It should be pointed out that this is only the second time that the Court has decided to apply Article 50 of its Statute, according to which “[t]he Court may, at any time, entrust any individual, body, bureau, commission, or other organization that it may select, with the task of carrying out an enquiry or giving an expert opinion.” While in the past, the Court has often been led to consider reports by experts, or even to hear the latter, these have in most cases been experts presented by the parties themselves, either as members of their delegations or as independent experts. The decision taken this time by the Court itself to arrange for an expert opinion has obliged it to ask the General Assembly for an additional budget in order to cover the costs induced. The Court is convinced that it can count on the understanding and support of the Assembly in this respect. The expert opinion in question has indeed been deemed by the Court, in the sovereign exercise of its responsibilities under the Statute, to be essential for the sound administration of justice in the present instance; although the additional cost of this operation is relatively modest – it amounts to US\$120,000 – it cannot be absorbed by the Court's current budget, which has been reduced by 10 per cent in comparison with the appropriations for the biennium 2014-2015.

*

I come now to the new cases brought before the Court.

On 6 June 2016, the Republic of Chile instituted proceedings against the Plurinational State of Bolivia with regard to a *Dispute over the Status and Use of the Waters of the Silala*. Chile alleges that the Silala is an international watercourse which flows between the two States, but that, since 1999, this status has been disputed by Bolivia, which has claimed its waters as exclusively Bolivian. According to the Application, the dispute between the two States therefore concerns the nature of the Silala as an international watercourse and the resulting rights and obligations of the Parties under international law. By an Order dated 1 July 2016, the Court fixed 3 July 2017 and 3 July 2018 as the respective time-limits for the filing of a Memorial by the Republic of Chile and a Counter-Memorial by the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

On 13 June 2016, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea instituted proceedings against France with regard to *Immunities and Criminal Proceedings*. Equatorial Guinea contends *inter alia* that, by initiating criminal proceedings against its Second Vice-President in charge of Defence and State Security, and by ordering the attachment of a building said to house its Embassy, France has disregarded immunities accorded under international law and violated Equatorial Guinea's sovereignty. By an Order dated 1 July 2016, the Court fixed 3 January 2017 and 3 July 2017 as the respective time-limits for the filing of a Memorial by the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and a Counter-Memorial by the French Republic. On 29 September 2016, Equatorial Guinea filed a Request for the indication of provisional measures in this case, contending that — and I cite — “[t]he pursuit of criminal proceedings in France against the Vice-President and the property of Equatorial Guinea, and France's refusal to respect the building located at 42 avenue Foch in Paris as premises of Equatorial Guinea's diplomatic mission in France, create a real and imminent risk of irreparable prejudice to the rights of Equatorial Guinea”. As I mentioned earlier, hearings on this request were held from 17 to 19 October 2016.

Lastly, on 14 June 2016, the Islamic Republic of Iran instituted proceedings against the United States of America with regard to a dispute concerning *Certain Iranian Assets*, alleging, in particular, that the United States has adopted a number of legislative and executive acts that have the practical effect of subjecting the assets and interests of Iran and Iranian entities, including those of the Central Bank of Iran, to enforcement proceedings, in breach of jurisdictional immunities recognized by customary international law and by the provisions of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights between Iran and the United States of America, which is binding between the Parties. After consulting with the Parties, the Court fixed 1 February 2017 and 1 September 2017 as the respective time-limits for the filing of a Memorial by the Islamic Republic of Iran and a Counter-Memorial by the United States of America.

This brings to three the number of new cases submitted to the Court during the period under review and to eleven the total number of cases currently on the Court's docket.

*

The diversity and complexity of the cases that the Court has dealt with over the course of this year is emblematic of its activities over the recent years. As you will have gathered from my report, the new cases filed earlier this year add to this diversity.

The Court has this year reached another milestone, having celebrated its seventieth anniversary last April. A formal sitting was held in The Hague for the occasion, and we were honoured that the Secretary General attended this sitting. Last Monday, I had the privilege to open an exhibition entitled “70 years in the service of Peace and Justice”, which has been organized on the occasion of this anniversary and which is open to visitors coming to this building.

While the work achieved over the past 70 years ought to be celebrated, the Court has not lost sight of the necessity to continuously reflect on the need to adapt its working methods to respond to the increase of its workload and complexification of the cases submitted to it. Rest assured that it will continue to use all the resources at its disposal to fulfil its role as principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

*

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. I wish this Seventy-first Session of the General Assembly every success.
