

**SPEECH BY H.E. JUDGE HISASHI OWADA, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
COURT OF JUSTICE, TO THE SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**26 October 2011**

President Al-Nasser,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and privilege for me to address the General Assembly for the third time as the President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the Report of the International Court of Justice for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2011.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you, His Excellency Mr. Al-Nasser, on your election as President of the Sixty-sixth Session of this Assembly and wish you every success in this distinguished office.

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I would like now, as is traditional, to present a succinct review of the judicial activities of the Court during the past year (October 2010-September 2011). The international community of States continues to bring a wide variety of legal disputes to the Court. Since I addressed you last October, the Court has rendered altogether four Judgments, and three Orders. They are: a judgment on the merits in the case concerning *Ahmadou Sadio Diallo (Republic of Guinea v. Democratic Republic of the Congo)*; one Order on provisional measures, in the case concerning *Certain Activities carried out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua)*; a Judgment on preliminary objections in the case concerning *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Georgia v. Russian Federation)*; two judgments denying requests for intervention in the case concerning *Territorial and Maritime Dispute (Nicaragua v. Colombia)* respectively filed by Costa Rica and Honduras; as well as an Order granting an Application for permission to intervene in the case concerning *Jurisdictional Immunities of the State (Germany v. Italy)* filed by Greece; and an Order on

provisional measures in the case concerning the *Request for Interpretation of the Judgment of 15 June 1962 in the Case concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear (Cambodia v. Thailand) (Cambodia v. Thailand)*. These cases have involved States from all regions of the world, and have raised a broad range of legal questions.

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Let me recapitulate them one by one in strict chronological order.

1. On 30 November 2010, the Court rendered its Judgment on the merits in the case concerning *Ahmadou Sadio Diallo (Republic of Guinea v. Democratic Republic of the Congo)*. As you no doubt recall, this case concerned alleged violations of the rights of Mr. Diallo, a Guinean citizen who settled in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1964 and founded two companies, Africom-Zaire and Africontainers-Zaire. At the end of the 1980s, Africom-Zaire and Africontainers-Zaire, acting through their *gérant*, Mr. Diallo, instituted proceedings against their business partners in an attempt to recover various debts. The disputes over the debts continued throughout the 1990s and remained largely unresolved. On 25 January 1988, Mr. Diallo was arrested and imprisoned and a year later released. On 5 November 1995, Mr. Diallo was again arrested and placed in detention with a view to his expulsion, which was carried out on 31 January 1996.

In its prior Judgment of 24 May 2007 on preliminary objections, the Court had held the Application of the Republic of Guinea to be admissible in so far as it concerned protection of Mr. Diallo's rights as an individual and protection of Mr. Diallo's direct rights as *associé* in Africom-Zaire and Africontainers-Zaire, but inadmissible in so far as the Application concerned protection of Mr. Diallo in respect of alleged violations of rights of Africom-Zaire and Africontainers-Zaire. In its final Judgment of 30 November 2010, the first question was that of the protection of Mr. Diallo's rights as an individual. As a preliminary matter, the Court found that the claim relating to Mr. Diallo's arrest and detention in 1988 to 1989 should be excluded from its consideration as it had not been raised by Guinea until its Reply and was neither implicit in the

original Application, nor did it arise directly out of a question in that Application, which concerned events in 1995 to 1996.

On that basis the Court considered Guinea's claim that the circumstances in which Mr. Diallo was arrested, detained and expelled during the period 1995 to 1996 constituted a breach by the DRC of its international obligations. Guinea argued that Mr. Diallo's expulsion from the Democratic Republic of the Congo breached Article 13 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 12, paragraph 4, of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. On this point, the Court observed that, in order to comply with those provisions, the expulsion of an alien lawfully in the territory of a State which is a party to those instruments must be decided in accordance with applicable domestic law and must not be arbitrary in nature. The Court held that the expulsion decree of 31 October 1995 did not comply with Congolese law and that thus the expulsion was in violation of Article 13 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 12, paragraph 4, of the African Charter. The Court also found that Mr. Diallo's right, afforded by Article 13 of the Covenant, to have his case reviewed by a competent authority had not been respected, and that the DRC had not demonstrated "compelling reasons of national security" to justify the denial of that right.

Furthermore, the Court held that Mr. Diallo's arrests and detention also violated Article 9 of the Covenant and Article 6 of the African Charter, concerning liberty and security of the person. It found that the deprivations of liberty suffered by Mr. Diallo did not take place in accordance with DRC law, were arbitrary, and that Mr. Diallo had not been informed, at the time of his arrests, of the reasons for those arrests or the charges against him. In addition, the Court found that the DRC had also violated Article 36 (1) (b) of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations by not informing Mr. Diallo, at the time of his arrests, of his right to request consular assistance from his country. On the other hand, with regard to the claim of Guinea that Mr. Diallo was subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment while in detention, the Court concluded that Guinea had failed to establish that such had been the case.

The second question that the Court dealt with in accordance with the disposition of the earlier judgment was the question of the protection of Mr. Diallo's direct rights as *associé* in Africom-Zaire and Africontainers-Zaire. On this question, the Court considered Guinea's claim

that the DRC had committed several internationally wrongful acts which engaged its responsibility towards Guinea; in particular, the claim that there had been breaches of Mr. Diallo's right to take part and vote in general meetings, of his rights relating to the *gérance* (management) of the companies, of his right to oversee and monitor that management and the right to property of Mr. Diallo over his *parts sociales* (shares) in the companies. The Court found that the alleged rights of Mr. Diallo as *associé* were not legally denied, even though their exercise may have been made more difficult by Congo's expulsion of Mr. Diallo. The Court did not find that any of these claimed breaches had occurred.

In the light of the circumstances of the case, in particular the fundamental character of the human rights obligations breached, the Court upheld Guinea's claim for reparation in the form of compensation for the injury suffered by Mr. Diallo.

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2. The next decision rendered by the Court in the period under review was its Order of 8 March 2011 on the request for the indication of provisional measures, pursuant to Article 41 of the Statute of the Court, in the case concerning *Certain Activities carried out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua)*. This case was brought by Costa Rica by an Application filed on 18 November 2010, in which it founded the jurisdiction of the Court on Article XXXI of the Pact of Bogotá and on the declarations made by the two States pursuant to Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute. The Application was filed in regard to an alleged "incursion into, occupation of and use by Nicaragua's Army of Costa Rican territory as well as breaches of Nicaragua's obligations towards Costa Rica". Costa Rica claimed that Nicaragua had occupied the territory of Costa Rica on two separate occasions in connection with the construction of a canal, as well as certain related works of dredging on the San Juan River.

Pending the determination of the case on the merits, Costa Rica requested the Court to order as provisional measures that Nicaragua not station troops or other personnel, engage in construction or enlargement of a canal, fell trees, remove vegetation, or dump sediment in the area

concerned; that Nicaragua suspend its dredging programme; and that Nicaragua refrain from any other action which might prejudice the rights of Costa Rica.

In its Order on provisional measures of protection, the Court determined that the instruments invoked by Costa Rica appeared, *prima facie*, to afford a basis on which the Court had jurisdiction to rule on the merits, enabling it to indicate provisional measures if it considered that the circumstances so required. The Court also found that the rights to be protected by these requested measures — in particular the right to assert sovereignty over a contested area along the boundary — were plausible, and that a link existed between the rights the protection of which was being sought and the provisional measures requested.

On the basis of this finding that it had the power to indicate provisional measures, the Court proceeded to examine whether there was a real and imminent risk that irreparable prejudice might be caused to the rights in dispute before the Court had given its final decision and found that, given that Nicaragua intended to carry out certain activities, if only occasionally, in the contested area, a real risk of irreparable prejudice to Costa Rica's claimed title to sovereignty over the said territory did exist. It further found that this situation gave rise to a real and present risk of incidents liable to cause irremediable harm in the form of bodily injury or death.

On the basis of these findings, the Court decided to indicate provisional measures to both of the Parties, ordering that each Party refrain from sending to, or maintaining in the disputed territory any personnel, whether civilian, police or security, until such time as the dispute on the merits had been decided or the Parties had come to an agreement on the subject. In addition, the Court held that Costa Rica may despatch civilian personnel charged with the protection of the environment of the disputed territory, in so far as it is necessary to avoid irreparable prejudice being caused to the part of the wetland where that territory is situated, on the condition that Costa Rica consult with the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in regard to these actions, and give Nicaragua prior notice of them. The Court also ordered that each Party refrain from any

action which might aggravate or extend the dispute before the Court or make it more difficult to resolve, and that each Party inform the Court as to its compliance with the provisional measures.

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3. The third decision of the Court related to its Judgment of 1 April 2011 on preliminary objections in the case concerning *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Georgia v. Russian Federation)*. As you no doubt recall proceedings in that case were instituted on 12 August 2008, when Georgia brought a case against the Russian Federation, alleging a violation by the latter of the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (hereinafter “CERD”). Georgia founded the jurisdiction of the Court on Article 22 of that Convention. The Court gave its judgment in 2008 on the Application in respect to provisional measures of protection, finding that it had *prima facie* jurisdiction. In the next phase of the case the Russian Federation raised four preliminary objections to the Court’s jurisdiction under Article 22 of CERD:

- (1) that no dispute between the Parties existed concerning the interpretation or application of CERD;
- (2) that the procedural requirements of Article 22 of CERD had not been fulfilled;
- (3) that the alleged wrongful conduct had taken place outside the territory of the Russian Federation, and thus the Court lacked jurisdiction *ratione loci*; and
- (4) that any jurisdiction that the Court might have was limited *ratione temporis* to events which had occurred after the entry into force of CERD between the Parties on 2 July 1999.

The Court examined the Russian Federation’s first preliminary objection in relation to events during three distinct time periods. With respect to the first period before CERD had entered into force between the Parties on 2 July 1999, the Court concluded that there was no evidence of the existence of a dispute about racial discrimination during that period and that even if a dispute had been found to have existed, it could not have been a dispute between the Parties with respect to the interpretation or application of CERD. With regard to the second, from the period after CERD entered into force between the Parties and before the beginning of armed conflict between them in

early August 2008, the Court reviewed documents and statements during this period and concluded that none of the documents or statements from that period provided any basis for a finding that there was a dispute between Georgia and the Russian Federation with respect to the interpretation and application of CERD during that time frame. With respect to the events during the third period which related to August 2008, in particular after the armed hostilities in South Ossetia that had begun during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008, the Court found that, while Georgia's claims primarily focused on allegations of unlawful use of force, they also expressly referred to ethnic cleansing by Russian forces. All of these claims had been made against the Russian Federation directly and had been rejected by the latter. The Court thus concluded that by 12 August 2008, there was a dispute between Georgia and the Russian Federation about the latter's compliance with its obligations under CERD. The Court accordingly dismissed the Russian Federation's first preliminary objection.

The Court then examined the Russian Federation's second preliminary objection concerning the procedural requirements of Article 22 of CERD, which provides that "[a]ny dispute . . . which is not settled by negotiation or by the procedures expressly provided for in this Convention, shall . . . be referred to the ICJ for decision". It found, based on an analysis of the ordinary meaning of the phrase used, that Article 22 did establish certain preconditions to be fulfilled before the Applicant could seize the Court on the basis of Article 22.

On that basis, the Court examined whether such preconditions had been met. In the instant case, with regard to the requirement to follow "the procedures expressly provided for in CERD", the Court took note that both sides agreed that, prior to the seisin of the Court, Georgia did not claim that it had used or attempted to use this mode of dispute resolution. The Court thus focused on the question of whether negotiation was a required precondition and, if so, whether that condition had been fulfilled. It observed, in the light of its finding on the first preliminary objection that a dispute had arisen only as of 9 August 2008, that the issue could be examined in relation to the period between that date and 12 August 2008, when the Application was filed. After reviewing the facts in the record relating to that period, the Court found that, although certain claims and counter-claims were made by the Parties during that period concerning ethnic cleansing which might evidence the existence of a dispute as to the interpretation and application of CERD,

they did not amount to attempts at negotiations by either Party. The Court thus concluded that Georgia had not established that in the relevant period, it had attempted to negotiate CERD-related matters with the Russian Federation, or that Georgia and the Russian Federation had engaged in negotiations with respect to the latter's compliance with its substantive obligations under CERD.

Having determined that this requirement contained in Article 22 had not been satisfied, the Court concluded that it did not need to determine whether the two conditions set out in Article 22 were cumulative or alternative. The Court accordingly held that Article 22 of CERD could not serve to found the Court's jurisdiction, and upheld the Russian Federation's second preliminary objection. It thus concluded that the case could not proceed to the merits phase, noting that it did not need to consider the Russian Federation's third or fourth preliminary objections.

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4. Let me now turn to the two Judgments of 4 May 2011 relating to a request to intervene in the case concerning *Territorial and Maritime Dispute (Nicaragua v. Colombia)* filed respectively by Costa Rica and Honduras. The principal case between Nicaragua and Colombia concerns the disputed sovereignty over several maritime features in the Caribbean Sea as well as the plotting of the maritime boundary between the Parties. On 25 February 2010 and 10 June 2010, respectively, Costa Rica and Honduras filed requests for permission to intervene in the case.

As for Costa Rica, it stated in its Application that it sought to intervene as a non-party for the "purpose of informing the Court of the nature of [its] legal rights and interests and of seeking to ensure that the Court's decision regarding the maritime boundary between Nicaragua and Colombia does not affect those rights and interests". In its Judgment of 4 May 2011 on whether to grant Costa Rica's Application to intervene, the Court first defined the legal framework for intervention provided for under Article 62 of the Statute and Article 81 of the Rules of Court.

The Court examined whether Costa Rica had established an "interest of a legal nature which may be affected" by the decision in the main proceedings. The Court accepted that although Nicaragua and Colombia differed in their assessment as to the limits of the area in which Costa

Rica might have a legal interest, they both recognized the existence of Costa Rica's interest of a legal nature in at least some areas claimed by the Parties to the main proceedings.

However, the Court, examining whether Costa Rica had established that the interest of a legal nature which it had set out was one which "may be affected" by the decision of the Court in the main proceedings, concluded that Costa Rica had not succeeded in establishing that point. The Court stated that it was in constant practice, when drawing a line delimiting the maritime areas between the Parties to the main proceedings, that it would, whenever necessary, end the line in question before it reached an area in which the interests of a legal nature of third States might become involved. In this situation, the Court held that the Costa Rican Application for permission to intervene in the case could not be granted.

As for Honduras, Honduras made clear in its Application that it primarily sought to be permitted to intervene in the pending case as a party. It was only if the Court did not accede to that request that Honduras requested, in the alternative, to be permitted to intervene as a non-party. In its Judgment of 4 May 2011 on whether to grant this Application of Honduras to intervene, the Court devoted a significant part of its analysis to the question of intervention as a party. The Court noted that while neither Article 62 of the Statute nor Article 81 of the Rules of Court specified the capacity in which a State might seek to intervene, it is accepted by the case law of the Court that a State might be permitted to intervene either as a non-party or as a party. The Court pointed out, however, that whatever the capacity in which a State is seeking to intervene, whether as a party or a non-party, it must fulfil the condition laid down by Article 62 of the Statute and demonstrate that it has an interest of a legal nature which might be affected by the future decision of the Court. On that basis, the Court turned to an examination of whether Honduras had satisfied that condition. The area in which Honduras had specified that it had an interest of a legal nature which might be affected by the decision in the main proceedings was an area which had been the subject of the Court's Judgment of 8 October 2007 in the case concerning *Territorial and Maritime Dispute between Nicaragua and Honduras in the Caribbean Sea (Nicaragua v. Honduras)*. The question on which the Court focused was whether that Judgment of 2007, to which Honduras was a party, barred it from making this request to intervene in a case which Honduras claimed to have "an interest of a legal nature".

The Court decided that by virtue of the principle of *res judicata*, as applied to the Judgment of 8 October 2007, Honduras could not have an interest of a legal nature in the area south of the maritime boundary line established by the Court in that decision. With respect to the area north of that boundary line, the Court concluded that Honduras could have no interest of a legal nature which might be affected by the decision in the main proceedings for the simple reason that neither of the parties to the new proceedings, i.e., Nicaragua and Colombia, was contesting the rights of Honduras over that area. The Court held that Honduras had no interest of a legal nature which might be affected in any of the maritime areas it had identified in its Application. The Court further observed that Honduras could not claim an interest of a legal nature in the effects that the decision of the Court in the main proceedings might have on the rights of Honduras under the 1986 Maritime Delimitation Treaty which had been agreed between Honduras and Colombia, inasmuch as the bilateral treaty was a matter exclusively between Honduras and Colombia and as such it had no relevance to the Court's eventual determination of the maritime boundary between Nicaragua and Colombia.

For these reasons, the Court held that the Honduran Application for permission to intervene in the case, either as a party or as a non-party, could not be granted.

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5. The next case in which the Court handed down its decision in the form of an Order on 4 July 2011 relates to a request to intervene by Greece in the case concerning *Jurisdictional Immunities of the State (Germany v. Italy)*. The Hellenic Republic filed an Application for permission to intervene in that case on 13 January 2011. The main proceedings to which the Application relates concerns a dispute over whether Italy has violated the jurisdictional immunity of Germany by allowing civil claims against it in Italian courts based on violations of international humanitarian law by the Third Reich during the Second World War. The basis for Greece's application to intervene was that it had an interest of a legal nature, to the extent that the Court, in the decision it will be called upon to render in the case between Germany and Italy, would rule on the question whether "a judgment handed down by a Greek court can be enforced on Italian

territory (having regard to Germany's jurisdictional immunity)". Greece stated that the decision of the Court as to whether Italian and Greek judgments for which the Italian court had given judgment to enforce in Italy may be enforced in Italy was directly and primarily of interest to Greece and could affect its interest of a legal nature.

The Court took the position that, in a judgment that it would render in the main proceedings between Germany and Italy, the Court might find it necessary to consider also the decisions of Greek courts in the context of the principle of State immunity (the issue in the main proceedings), for the purposes of examining the request in Germany's submissions relating to the issue of whether Italy committed a breach of Germany's jurisdictional immunity by declaring Greek judgments as enforceable in Italy. Given that possibility, the Court held that this element was sufficient to conclude that Greece had an interest of a legal nature which may be affected by the judgment in the main proceedings.

Greece having fulfilled the criteria for intervention laid down in Article 81 of the Rules of Court, the Court granted its request to intervene as a non-party, in so far as this intervention would be limited to decisions relating to illegal acts committed by Germany during the Second World War rendered by Greek domestic courts and declared enforceable by Italian courts. The request having been granted, the Court gave its decision in the form of an Order of a procedural nature, specifying the form of procedure to follow, rather than in the form of a judgment as it was in the two previous judgments (see para. 4 above) which I discussed in this report.

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6. Let me turn now to the sixth case — an Order on provisional measures handed down by the Court on 18 July 2011 in the case concerning the *Request for Interpretation of the Judgment of 15 June 1962 in the Case concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear (Cambodia v. Thailand) (Cambodia v. Thailand)*. Cambodia filed a Request for Interpretation of an earlier Judgment rendered by the Court on 15 June 1962, under Article 60 of the Statute of the Court on 28 April 2011, claiming that a dispute existed between the Parties as to the meaning and scope of this 1962 Judgment. In the 1962 Judgment, the Court had found *inter alia* that Cambodia held

sovereignty over the Temple of Preah Vihear, situated in the border area between Cambodia and Thailand.

On the same day that it filed its Application for Interpretation of the 1962 Judgment, Cambodia also submitted a request for the indication of provisional measures in order to “cause [the] incursions onto its territory [by Thailand] to cease” pending the Court’s decision on the Request for interpretation of the 1962 Judgment.

At this stage of the proceedings, when the Court dealt with the request for provisional measures, the Court first addressed the issue of whether a dispute appeared to exist as to the meaning or scope of the 1962 Judgment, relating in particular

- (1) to the meaning and scope of the phrase “vicinity on Cambodian territory” used in the operative clause of that Judgment;
- (2) to the nature of the obligation imposed on Thailand by the operative clause, to “withdraw any military or police forces, or other guards or keepers”; and
- (3) to the issue of whether the Judgment did or did not recognize with binding force the line shown on the map submitted by Cambodia in the original proceedings as representing the frontier between the two Parties.

In its Order of 18 July 2011, the Court held that the rights claimed by Cambodia, in so far as they were based on the 1962 Judgment as interpreted by Cambodia, were plausible, and that the necessary link between the alleged rights and the measures requested had been established. Examining whether there was a real risk of irreparable prejudice that might be caused to the rights which were in dispute, the Court concluded that because of the persistent tensions and absence of a settlement to the conflict, there was a real and imminent risk of irreparable prejudice being caused to the rights claimed by Cambodia, and there was urgency.

On this basis, the Court decided to indicate provisional measures to both Parties. In the Order, the Court in particular established a provisional demilitarized zone, the co-ordinates of which were set out in its Order, and ordered both Parties immediately to withdraw their military personnel from that zone and to refrain from any military presence within that zone and from any armed activity directed at that zone. The Court also ordered both Parties

- (1) to continue the co-operation which they had entered into within ASEAN and, in particular, to allow the observers appointed by that organization to have access to the provisional demilitarized zone;
- (2) to refrain from any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute before the Court or make it more difficult to resolve; and
- (3) to inform the Court as to compliance with the provisional measures. It also ordered Thailand not to obstruct Cambodia's free access to the Temple of Preah Vihear or Cambodia's provision of fresh supplies to its non-military personnel in the Temple.

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In addition to these seven decisions handed down during the reporting period for 2010/2011, the Court has held hearings in March 2011 in the case concerning *Application of the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995 (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia v. Greece)*; this case has completed its written and oral proceedings and is now under deliberation by the Court. Although outside of the reporting period, I should also mention that the Court has also completed and held hearings in the case concerning *Jurisdictional Immunities of the State (Germany v. Italy: Greece intervening)* and is now under deliberation by the Court with a view to its final decision. In addition, the Court is currently considering the request for an advisory opinion made by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in respect of Judgment No. 2867 of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization on a parallel basis.

As you can see, given a remarkable increase in the number of cases on the docket, the Court is now opining on more than a few cases on a parallel basis, thus making its best endeavours to eliminate a backlog on judicial work. Our current docket stands at fifteen cases, but most of them are still at the stage of being in the hands of the parties who are presenting their written proceedings in advance of the oral hearings. The two most recent cases that have been filed during the reporting period in question are the case concerning *Certain Activities carried out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua)* and the case concerning the *Request for Interpretation of the Judgment of 15 June 1962 in the Case concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear*

(Cambodia v. Thailand) (*Cambodia v. Thailand*). I know that the best efforts are being made by the Court to respond to the high expectations of the international community for an expeditious handling of the cases referred to the International Court of Justice.

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Mr. President,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This marks my final address to you as President of the International Court of Justice. It thus seems an appropriate moment to reflect on the trust that the international community of States continues to place in the Court to handle a wide variety of legal disputes. States from all corners of the world, faithful to their attachment to international law, continue to have recourse to the Court in order to find a judicial settlement to their disputes. In the three years of my presidency, the docket has never contained less than 15 cases. In fact, in the last ten years, there has been an average of at least 15 cases on the docket, and sometimes as many as 28 cases<sup>1</sup>. As is apparent from the overview I have given today of the Court's work in the last year, the substantive areas on which the Court is being asked to rule are broader in scope than ever before, with each case presenting distinct legal and factual elements. Furthermore, cases are frequently made up of different incidental phases, from preliminary objections to provisional measures, to requests for intervention and interpretation. The Court has as a result been consistently handling cases in parallel and shortening the time between the closure of written proceedings and the opening of the oral proceedings.

It is no exaggeration to say that all regions of the world have become closely intertwined. In this twenty-first century, international politics are undeniably inter-connected; a truly global economy has emerged; and our natural environment and global climate change have created new challenges. In these times of unprecedented interconnection between States and peoples, it is my sincere belief that a firm reliance on international law must underpin any and all future

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report 2002-2003, document A/58/4.

developments on the global stage. The International Court of Justice, as guardian of international law, is proud to play a vital role in our increasingly globalized world.

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Mr. President,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my hope that Member States will continue to rely on the International Court of Justice to assist them in the pacific settlement of their disputes and that more States will accept the Court's jurisdiction, be that through a declaration under Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute, or through the signature of the many multilateral treaties which now contain compromissory clauses that refer disputes as to the interpretation or application of those treaties to the Court.

Let me close by offering my profound thanks not only for the opportunity to address you today, but also in the trust you have placed in the Court over the past three years. I wish you a most productive Sixty-sixth Session of this Assembly.

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