

**SPEECH BY H.E. JUDGE HISASHI OWADA, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT
OF JUSTICE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA, H.E. DR. DANILO TÜRK**

29 NOVEMBER 2011

President Danilo Türk of the Republic of Slovenia,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Court of Justice, I wish to extend to you, Mr. President, a most sincere welcome and convey to you our great sense of honour and privilege on the occasion of your visit.

I am particularly pleased to welcome you to the International Court of Justice today since you are yourself a highly regarded international lawyer. I note that you enjoyed an illustrious career as an academic at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana, where you headed the University's Institute of International Law and International Relations. Before your election as President of Slovenia in 2007, you also had a long and impressive career in the United Nations. In 1992 you assumed the position of Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia at the United Nations, where I had the pleasure of sharing common experiences with you, Mr. President. You were also President of the Security Council in August 1998 and November 1999, and you went on to serve for five years as a senior member of the United Nations Secretariat.

Mr. President, the Republic of Slovenia is one of the youngest members of the international community, celebrating its 20th anniversary of independence this year. However, its experience of statehood can be traced more than a thousand years back, to the Duchy of Carantania (from the 7th to the 11th century), which was the oldest known independent Slavonic union in this area and has sometimes been regarded by historians as one of the most democratic communities of its time.

While no judge of Slovenian nationality has yet served on the bench of this Court, Slovenia as a State has made substantial contributions to international law. Already prior to its independence, Slovenia took part as a constituent part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the creation of the world's first principal institution, namely, the League of Nations. In

1945, Slovenia participated as one of the constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia in the San Francisco Conference which adopted the Charter of the United Nations.

With its declaration of independence on 25 June 1991, Slovenia committed itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and succeeded to all treaties to which the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had been a party. Since its creation, Slovenia has been fully devoted to the principles of international law, including the principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes and the protection of human rights, as reflected in the founding documents of the Slovenian State, such as the Slovenian Declaration of Independence, the Basic Constitutional Charter on the Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Slovenia, and the Constitution of Slovenia. The Slovenian national anthem praises all nations who aspire to peaceful coexistence.

On 22 May 1992, Slovenia became the 176th Member of the United Nations and on that occasion, the then-President of Slovenia, Mr. Milan Kučan, made clear that “Slovenia did not declare independence in order to become an island in the middle of the world but to ensure an appropriate role and just treatment in the processes of integration which it joins” (United Nations document A/46.PV.86 of 29 May 1992). Indeed, two decades later, Slovenia has firmly established its role as a committed member of numerous international organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which it joined in 1992; the Council of Europe, which it joined in 1993; the European Union, which it joined in 2004; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which it joined in 2004; and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which it joined in 2010.

With a strong determination to foster international peace and security, Slovenia was elected as a non-permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council in 1997, only a few years after gaining independence, and held the presidency of the Council twice in the course of its two-year term.

The Republic of Slovenia has also contributed substantially to United Nations peacekeeping efforts: over 5000 Slovenian soldiers and police officers have been deployed in various international peace operations all over the world, and have played a particularly significant role in peacekeeping activities in the Balkans, where Slovenia has continuously shown the willingness and ability to assist in the stabilization of the conflict situation in that part of Europe.

As a modern democratic country, Slovenia has always strived to maintain a high level of respect for human rights in its society and has been a devoted advocate of human rights on the international level. It is a party to a great many of the main international instruments in the fields of human rights, international humanitarian law and refugee law, including in the area of human rights law, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention Against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; in the area of international humanitarian law, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols; and in the area of refugee law, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

Slovenia also actively participates in the work of international human rights bodies. Between 2007 and 2010, Slovenia was a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, focusing in particular on the promotion of the rights of the child and other vulnerable groups, and the promotion of human rights education. Slovenia places the rights of the child at the top of its foreign policy agenda and has contributed significantly to international efforts in this area. Indeed, during its Presidency of the European Union in 2008, Slovenia drew attention to the situation of children in armed conflicts and commissioned a study on “Enhancing the EU Response to Children Affected by Armed Conflict with Particular Reference to Development Policy”. This year, the Slovenian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Sanja Štiglic, is the chair of the Executive Board of UNICEF, which is seeking to achieve universal ratification of both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Slovenia has also been increasingly active in the field of international development co-operation, focusing especially on the Western Balkan countries, as well as in the field of international humanitarian assistance, concentrating its operations primarily on assistance to children in post-conflict situations. In this context, I note that it hosts the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, a donation-funded international humanitarian organization helping to eliminate the dangers of mines and rehabilitate victims in post-conflict periods.

In addition, Slovenia fully supports the international community's efforts to fight terrorism and all forms of organized crime, as well as its efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is a party to the major conventions on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and prohibition of other types of weapons of mass destruction.

In the context of the work of this Court, and on international tribunals, the great importance that Slovenia attaches to the peaceful settlement of disputes and the rule of law is to be noted in particular. Thus Slovenia participated actively in the procedure of this Court through the submission of a Written Statement during the advisory proceedings on the Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo. In addition, Slovenia actively supports the work of other international courts and tribunals. It was a founding member of the International Criminal Court, and a member of its Bureau of the Assembly of States Parties between 2008 and 2011. In this capacity, the Slovenian delegation participated in the 2010 review conference in Kampala, contributing to the efforts to define the crime of aggression under the Rome Statute.

I am also pleased to note, that the Slovenian jurist, Professor Dr. Ernest Petrič, President of the Constitutional Court of Slovenia, has since 2006 been a member of the International Law Commission, and was this month re-elected for another five-year term. Among other Slovenian international jurists of renown, may I mention Professor Jernej Sekolec, former Secretary of UNCITRAL and Director of the International Trade Law Division of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, and currently a Slovenian member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the Vice-President of the London Court of International Arbitration.

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In conclusion, Mr. President, your country has shown, in the first two decades of its existence, a profound dedication to international law and an impressive record in international institutions. Your presence among us today reflects both your country's commitment to justice, freedom and mutual understanding among nations and your personal commitment to the cause of international law.

A visit such as this one encourages us in the accomplishment of our mission. For this we offer you, Mr. President, our heartfelt thanks. Thank you.

Now I call upon President Danilo Türk, to give his speech.
