



**11.04.2016 - In April 1956, the International Court of Justice convened at The Hague to settle disputes between Member States with the broader aim of maintaining international peace and security.**

On 20th April, the Court will celebrate its official 70th Anniversary with a commemorative service at the [Peace Palace](#) to be attended by the Secretary General and other guests. The occasion presents a timely opportunity to acknowledge the role of the Court and recognise its capacity for achieving [Sustainable Development Goal #16](#) : Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

1. What is the International Court of Justice?

The Court is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the [United Nations Charter](#), signed in 1945 at San Francisco and began work in 1946 in the Peace Palace, The Hague, Netherlands. Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in

New York.

The Court is composed of 15 judges and has a dual role. Firstly, to settle legal disputes between States submitted to it by them and secondly, to issue advisory opinions on legal matters referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies. The official languages of the Court are English and French.

## 2. Who may submit cases to the Court?

Only States are eligible to appear before the Court in contentious cases. At present, this means the 193 United Nations Member States. The Court has no jurisdiction to deal with applications from individuals, non-governmental organizations, corporations or any other private entity. A State may take up the case of one of its nationals and invoke against another State the wrongs which its national claims to have suffered at the hands of the latter; the dispute then becomes one between States.

## 3. What differentiates the International Court of Justice from the International Criminal Court and the ad hoc international criminal tribunals?

The International Court of Justice has no jurisdiction to try individuals accused of war crimes or crimes against humanity. As it is not a criminal court, it does not have a prosecutor able to initiate proceedings. This task is the preserve of national courts, the ad hoc criminal tribunals established by the United Nations such as the [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#) (ICTY) and the [International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda](#) (ICTR).

## 4. Why are some disputes between States not considered by the Court?

The Court can only hear a dispute when requested to do so by one or more States. It cannot deal with a dispute of its own motion. The States concerned must also have access to the Court and have accepted its jurisdiction, in other words they must consent to the Court's considering

the dispute in question. This is a fundamental principle governing the settlement of international disputes, States being sovereign and free to choose the methods of resolving their disputes.

#### 5. Are decisions of the Court binding?

Judgments delivered by the Court (or by one of its Chambers) in disputes between States are binding upon the parties concerned. Article 94 of the United Nations Charter lays down that "each Member of the United Nations undertakes to comply with the decision of [the Court] in any case to which it is a party".

Judgments are final and without appeal. If either of the parties challenges their scope or meaning, it has the option to request an interpretation. In the event of the discovery of a fact hitherto unknown to the Court which might be a decisive factor, either party may apply for revision of the judgment. As regards advisory opinions, it is usually for the United Nations organs and specialized agencies requesting them to give effect to them or not by whatever means are appropriate for them.

Follow the ICJ 70th Anniversary celebrations with the upcoming #ICJ70 Events:

Monday 11 April: Launch of special "ICJ70 webpage"

Tuesday 12 April: Launch of photo exhibition and new ICJ stamp (location: The Hague Town Hall)

Monday 18 April: ICJ's historical anniversary date

Monday 18- Tuesday 19 April 2016: Opening of ICJ Seminar: "The International Court of Justice at 70: in retrospect and in prospect"

20 April: Official celebration ("solemn sitting") in the Peace Palace in presence of UNSG and other VIPs

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