



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT CEREMONY TO COMMEMORATE THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE**

The Hague, 20 April 2016

Your Majesties,
Your Excellency Mr. Bert Koenders, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Honourable Mr. Ronny Abraham, President of the International Court of Justice,
Honourable Mr. Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, Vice-President of the Court,

And honourable judges of the ICJ,
Honourable Mr. Phillippe Couvreur, Registrar of the Court,
Honourable members of the International Court of Justice,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to open this celebration of the 70th anniversary of the International Court of Justice.

Over the past seven decades, the United Nations has grown in the size of its membership, and in the scope of its activities.

But everything we do is still defined by the opening pledge of our Charter to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and establish conditions under which justice and respect for international law can be maintained.

Respect for the rule of law – within and among nations -- is one of the foundations of progress in virtually all areas of our work.

It is an essential thread in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Over the years, the International Court of Justice, as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, has made a central contribution to the rule of law.

It has stepped in effectively where diplomatic or political measures have failed.

It has helped countries to settle their disputes by peaceful means.

And it has compiled a solid record of effective and impartial judgments, thereby building global trust in the Court's work and faith in the power of law.

Today, the Court's docket is fuller than ever.

Member States are turning to the Court on some of their most complex matters.

The Court is also modernizing its working methods.

Judgments are delivered more swiftly, leading to increased certainty for the parties.

The Judges have repeatedly demonstrated their expertise in technically difficult and politically sensitive fields, including maritime and territorial disputes.

I welcome these advances and commend the honourable Judges and staff of the Court for their diligence and commitment.

Each individual judgment of this Court benefits the States involved, resolving the specific dispute at issue and providing certainty in their mutual relations.

In addition, the collective jurisprudence of the Court has made an enormous contribution to public international law.

This benefits the broader community of nations and, ultimately, the well-being and protection of the people we serve.

Many judges, lawyers and students around the world study your judgements.

I was one of them, as students and also public servants during my lifetime as public servant.

I have been one of the admirers of your wisdom and judgement on complex legal issues.

I commend all States that have settled their disputes peacefully before this Court.

And I call on all States that have not yet accepted the Court's jurisdiction to do so.

Similarly, I call for steadfast compliance with its judgments.

The importance of resolving disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law has never been more important.

Conflict is the most efficient method of derailing development known to humankind.

It is essential that all States reaffirm their commitment under the Charter to resolve disputes by peaceful means.

If the path of peace is chosen, if States entrust the Judges of this august institution to determine their differences, stability is fostered and the broader international community benefits.

The founding Members of the United Nations acted with a vision and foresight in establishing the International Court of Justice.

Its presence and its work remain as relevant as ever for international community.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, we mark the Court's achievements, and we look forward to a future of peace, stability and justice for all. Congratulations again.

Thank you very much.