



General Assembly
30 October, 2019
International Court of Justice

Statement on behalf of the Nordic Countries
Delivered by
Norway to the United Nations

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

Mr. President,

Let me first thank President Yusuf for the report of the International Court of Justice, covering the period from 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019, and for his presentation of it today.

The Nordic countries attach great importance to the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The Court has earned a solid reputation as an impartial institution with the highest legal and moral standards. The Court diligently fulfils its role, in accordance with its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations. It stands as the cornerstone of the rules-based international order. As President Yusuf so succinctly put it in his speech last September: “There is no nation on earth that does not benefit from the rules-based multilateral system, which governs all facets of international relations today, and it is in the interest of all to safeguard and protect those rules”.

During the reporting period under review, the Court has experienced a high level of activity. It delivered judgments in three contentious cases, gave one advisory opinion, handed down 16 orders, held public hearings in six cases, and was seized in two new contentious cases. The 16 cases now pending before the Court involve parties from four continents: Africa, America, Asia

and Europe. The geographical spread of the cases pending before the Court is illustrative of the global character of the jurisdiction of the Court. The currently pending cases involve a wide variety of subject-matters, such as interpretation and application of treaties, territorial and maritime disputes, diplomatic and consular rights, economic relations, human rights, international responsibility and compensation for harm. This diversity testifies to the universal character of the Court's jurisdiction, to the Court's growing specialization in complex aspects of international law, and importantly, to the willingness of States to entrust their disputes to the Court.

Mr. President,

The Court's role in the maintenance of international peace and security is significant. It contributes to international peace and security in two ways, first by settling disputes, the aggravation of which might lead to international tension and second, by developing and clarifying rules and principles of international law, which in turn provides a basis for peaceful relations among States.

The submission of a dispute to the Court is not an unfriendly act and should not be regarded as such. It is rather an act to fulfil the obligation of all States to settle their disputes peacefully. The Nordic countries recall that this General Assembly regularly calls upon States that had not yet done so to consider accepting the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in accordance with its Statute, most recently in its resolution 73/207.

Today 193 States are parties to the Statute of the Court, and thereby have access to it. We welcome the recent declarations recognizing as compulsory the jurisdiction of the Court, in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 2 of the Statute of the Court, bringing the total number of such declarations to 74. We note that the more than 300 bilateral or multilateral treaties, which provide the Court with jurisdiction *ratione materiae* in the resolution of disputes between the States parties, are listed on the website of the Court. The Court's jurisdiction can, furthermore be established by special agreement between the States concerned. Finally, jurisdiction upon a consent yet to be given or manifested by the State against which the application is made, in reliance on Article 38, paragraph 5 of the Rules of Court is also an option.

The practice of the Court has contributed to the prevention and resolution of international disputes and to the strengthening of the rule of law. While the judgments are binding only upon the parties concerned, the Court's jurisprudence has far-reaching impacts. It has proven to be most useful as guidance in the interpretation of international law.

We need to ensure that the Court has adequate resources to fulfil its mandate. To facilitate judicial settlement of disputes through the Court, the Nordic countries have made voluntary payments to the Secretary-General's Trust Fund to Assist States in the settlement of Disputes through the International Court of Justice. We thank States that have made similar contributions to the trust fund and encourage all States to consider contributing.

Mr. President,

The Nordic countries would also like to express their appreciation for the Court's redesigned and updated website, which gives instant access to past and pending cases, judgements and opinions, including the jurisprudence of the Court's predecessor, the Permanent Court of International Justice. The website provides useful information for States and international organizations wishing to make use of the procedures open to them at the Court. The Nordic countries also appreciate the dissemination work that the Court carries out by means of its publications, through multimedia platforms and social media. This all facilitates the wider study, recognition and dissemination of the Court's important work.

The Nordic countries would like to use this opportunity to reaffirm their continuing support to the International Court of Justice.

Thank you.