



STATEMENT BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INAUGURAL SITTING OF
THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE**

**THE PEACE PALACE
THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS
12 APRIL 2006**

(Please check against delivery)

Your Majesty, Mr. Secretary-General, Madame President, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to represent the United Nations General Assembly at the 60th anniversary of the inaugural sitting of the International Court of Justice. It is a special honour for the United Nations that Her Majesty, Queen Beatrix of Netherlands, graciously attends this historic occasion. My great appreciation also goes to the Dutch government and the Dutch people for being such welcoming and generous hosts for this august Court and principal organ of the United Nations.

At the outset, I wish to thank Judge Shi Jiuyong, outgoing President of the Court, for his splendid and much respected work throughout his Presidency of the Court. And to the new President, Judge Rosalyn Higgins, I extend my warmest congratulations. With your extensive knowledge and experience, and with your wisdom and wit, you will, without a doubt, continue to steer a clear course for the Court in the years ahead.

At the 2005 World Summit last September, the United Nations celebrated its 60th anniversary. Leaders from all over the world pledged their strong support to the United Nations and to its role in promoting the rule of law – in particular, the role of the International Court of Justice. The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document emphasizes the obligation of States to settle their disputes by peaceful means in accordance with Chapter VI of the UN Charter and under the heading Pacific Settlement of Disputes. The Document reaffirms that the Court is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations in adjudicating disputes among States.

In the sixty years since its establishment, the Court has dealt with a wide range of issues, including boundary disputes, diplomatic protection, genocide and use of force. It has also contributed to developing norms of international law in areas such as environmental law and human rights. The role of the Court in resolving disputes between States has helped promote peaceful settlement and, by that, international peace and security. There is a growing role for the Court in this regard.

The fact that Member States have, year after year, repeated their desire to see more use of the Court in settling disputes between States is strong evidence of the confidence Member States have in this World Court. This represents a capital of confidence which can be productively utilized. Here, I would like to encourage States that have not yet done so to consider recognizing the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court.

Another vital role of the Court is to promote international law through its advisory opinions. The General Assembly has requested advisory legal opinions on several occasions in the past, and will undoubtedly continue to do so. Advisory opinions provide a valuable tool for legal clarifications and can help prevent disagreements from escalating into full-blown disputes.

The General Assembly has worked alongside the Court for more than half a century. The relationship between these two institutions is vital in view of the General Assembly's responsibility to elect the highly qualified judges of the Court. In turn, the President of the Court has the responsibility to keep Member States of the General Assembly abreast of the Court's activities through annual presentations. This latter point underscores the co-ordination

which is vital and much needed between the United Nations' principal organs.

The Court's efforts to constantly update and improve its working methods – including through the use of modern technology – deserve recognition, especially at a time when the United Nations is undergoing reform and transformation. I am aware that these efforts require appropriate resources.

As President of the General Assembly, I will continue to encourage Member States to turn to the Court to settle their disputes, and to seek advisory opinions through the appropriate organ, when needed. In this context, I very much appreciate and support the Secretary-General's Trust Fund to assist States to resort to the Court to resolve their disputes.

On this auspicious occasion, I wish in closing the President, the Members, and the staff of the Court a happy anniversary and every success in your future endeavours. I am confident that the Court, in the words of the President, will remain the lighthouse beacon in our ever expanding system of international law. You have the full trust and confidence of the General Assembly of the United Nations in your important mission.