

30 October 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
regarding the discussion of the General Assembly
on the Report of the International Court of Justice**

At the Millennium Summit, the Heads of State and Government stated, and I quote "We resolve to strengthen respect for the rule of law in international as in national affairs and, in particular, to ensure compliance by Member States with the decisions of the International Court of Justice, in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, in cases to which they are parties." As the President of the General Assembly I have emphasized, that it is now for the Member States to take action and implement the outcome of the Summit.

The International Court of Justice has a prominent role in strengthening the international legal order and contributing to the peaceful settlement of disputes. The report before us demonstrates that States are increasingly willing to submit disputes for its consideration and that there is a growing move towards judicial settlement of international disputes. Other positive developments to mention are better knowledge technology, including through the website of the International Court of Justice.

But much still remains to be done.

States could, for instance, make wider use of the Optional Clause in the Court's Statute. I hope that more States will place their trust in the Court by unilaterally recognizing as binding its jurisdiction.

On the other hand, the Report's account of the financial situation of the Court makes it very clear that the Court needs more resources to enable it to cope with its increased workload.

According to the report, the current budget, just over 10 Million US dollar per year, is lower than of 1946, whilst the Court's activities have increased a great deal since then. Many have expressed the valid concerns that the limited resources may impede the Court from performing its function as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It would be consistent that the expansion of the scope of the Court's activities, which has been demanded for so long, should now be matched by adequate funding.

The International Court of Justice is not the only international tribunal now at work. Recent years have witnessed the establishment of several new international courts of law. Some, like the International Tribunal for the Law of the sea, may deal with matters that can also fall within the jurisdiction of this Court. Others, like the ad hoc tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as

well as the future International Criminal Court, may deal with cases that cannot be brought before this Court. All these courts contribute to the strengthening of the rule of law.

Recent developments in international political relations have facilitated recognition of the jurisdiction of international courts. The world has turned from mere coexistence to cooperation. One of the ways in which this is reflected is a willingness on the part of States to take their disputes to this Court. There is a growing consensus that it is in the interests of all parties to have their disputes resolved through a binding third-party settlement.

The International Court of Justice has significantly strengthened the rule of the law in international relations and contributed to respect for law and to international peace and security. It is well-recognized that the influence of the Court extends also beyond formal limits thanks to the prestige and authority that the Court enjoys in the eyes of the world. The international Court of Justice deserves the full support of all Members of the United Nations.