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Agenda item 77: Programme of Assistance

Statement by Iceland and Norway  
Delivered by Mr Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik  
First Secretary, Norway

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Mr Chair

I make the following statement on behalf of Iceland and Norway.

Let me start by thanking Ms Virginia Morris for her very informative presentation and for her dedicated service to the Programme of Assistance. We are also thankful for the report by the Secretary-General (A/69/516) which in our view illustrates the breadth of the work carried out by the Programme of Assistance. We are especially encouraged to see the number of activities taking place in developing countries and thus empowering legal communities in places where legal resources are often lacking.

Ensuring respect for international law lies at the heart of the United Nations. A peaceful and stable world order is predicated on an international community that respects the rule of international law in all its different forms and branches. Over the last decades, we have seen

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how international law has grown into a multifaceted and vast academic and practical discipline in continuous development. International law is the product of a multitude of factors and actors: state practice, inter-state agreements, international, regional and national jurisprudence, and scholarly literature from all corners of the world all play a crucial role in the formation of international law. As a result, international law is a refined, but also an extremely complex body of law.

The United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law recognizes the value of mastering the complexities of international law, and in this regard, the fundamental importance of making the most advanced and sophisticated international legal resources available to all. The Programme of Assistance is instrumental in the strengthening of the rule of law, and in ensuring peaceful relations between States. We would in particular want to emphasize the benefit of the Programme of Assistance for lawyers from all countries, especially those in developing countries.

This Programme of Assistance comprises amongst others an Audiovisual Library, regional courses and fellowship programmes, all of which have at their core a mission to promote international law through education and training, and thus contributing to the inception and empowerment of legal communities all over the world.

The Programme of Assistance has educated and inspired some of the most renowned scholars and practitioners of today's international legal community. Many of these are now reciprocating by lecturing and teaching on behalf of the Programme of Assistance. It is in our view not a coincidence that the Programme holds almost universal acclaim throughout the community of international lawyers.

The hard work of all of those who contribute to the Programme of Assistance is not in vain. Since its creation in 2008 the Audiovisual Library has been accessed by some 862 000 computers in all of the UN's 193 Member States, and the number of applications for the regional courses and fellowships is staggering and confirms the demand for international law training and research materials in developing as well as in developed countries.

We have noted with concern the continued problem of insufficient funding for the Programme of Assistance. Regional courses have been cancelled and office staff have had to depart their positions. It is in our view clear that voluntary contributions have proved to be an unsustainable funding method. It is our view that the performance of this core activity of the United Nations cannot be dependent on the good will of a few Member States.

We must ensure reliable funding of the Programme's activities. We were therefore encouraged to see the Advisory Committee recommend that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to include additional resources under the proposed programme budget for biennium 2016-2017 for the regional courses as well as the continuation and further development of the Audiovisual Library.

It is our view that funding the Programme of Assistance over the regular budget is the only realistic way to ensure reliable and adequate economic conditions. We encourage all Member States to ensure that the General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to act accordingly, thus following up on the Advisory Committee's recommendations. The Programme of Assistance has been a core activity of the United Nations for more than half a century. We must now take this opportunity and ensure the continuation of its global promotion of international justice.

Thank you.