



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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Press Release

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Judge Peter Tomka (Slovakia) elected President of the International Court of Justice

Judge Bernardo Sepúlveda-Amor (Mexico) elected Vice-President

THE HAGUE, 6 February 2012. Judge Peter Tomka (Slovakia) was today elected President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by his peers and Judge Bernardo Sepúlveda-Amor (Mexico) was elected Vice-President, each for a term of three years.

Biographies of President Tomka and Vice-President Sepúlveda-Amor, who have been Members of the Court since 6 February 2003 and 6 February 2006, respectively, can be found on the Court's website (www.icj-cij.org) under the heading "Members of the Court"/"Current Members".

The International Court of Justice, composed of 15 Members, is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It adjudicates upon disputes between States and gives advisory opinions to United Nations organs and agencies (for further details see below). There are currently 13 cases on the Court's General List.

Following the elections held on 10 November 2011 and 13 December 2011 by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council to fill the five seats which were due to fall vacant on 6 February 2012 (see Press Release No. 2011/34 and No. 2011/39), the composition of the Court is now as follows:

President	Peter Tomka (Slovakia)
Vice-President	Bernardo Sepúlveda-Amor (Mexico)
Judges	Hisashi Owada (Japan)
	Ronny Abraham (France)
	Kenneth Keith (New Zealand)
	Mohamed Bennouna (Morocco)
	Leonid Skotnikov (Russian Federation)
	Antônio Augusto Cançado Trindade (Brazil)
	Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf (Somalia)
	Christopher Greenwood (United Kingdom)
	Xue Hanqin (China)
	Joan E. Donoghue (United States of America)
	Giorgio Gaja (Italy)
	Julia Sebutinde (Uganda)

It should be noted that the Court is currently composed of only 14 Members, following the resignation of Mr. Awn Shawkat Al-Khasawneh (Jordan), former judge and Vice-President of the Court. It is recalled (see also Press Release No. 2012/1) that the United Nations Security Council has fixed Friday 27 April 2012 as the date for the election, by the Security Council and the General Assembly, of a successor to Mr. Al-Khasawneh.

Note: The Court's press releases do not constitute official documents.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Charter in June 1945 and began its activities in April 1946. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York. The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States (its judgments have binding force and are without appeal for the parties concerned); and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and agencies of the system. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected for a nine-year term by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. It is assisted by a Registry, its international secretariat, whose activities are both judicial and diplomatic, as well as administrative. The official languages of the Court are French and English.

The ICJ, a court open only to States for contentious proceedings, and to certain organs and institutions of the United Nations system for advisory proceedings, should not be confused with the other — mostly criminal — judicial institutions based in The Hague and adjacent areas, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY, an ad hoc court created by the Security Council), the International Criminal Court (ICC, the first permanent international criminal court established by treaty, which does not belong to the United Nations system), the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL, an independent judicial body composed of Lebanese and international judges, which is not a United Nations tribunal and does not form part of the Lebanese judicial system), or the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA, an institution founded in 1899, which is independent of the United Nations).

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