

Advancing justice and international law

Promotion of justice and international law

What we do

- Legal services for the United Nations as a whole
- Legal services for United Nations organs and funds and programmes
- Extraordinary international accountability mechanisms
- Custody, registration and publication of treaties
- Development and codification of international law
- Law of the sea and ocean affairs
- International trade

Our team

- Office of Legal Affairs
- International Court of Justice
- International accountability mechanisms

A view of the mural “Mankind’s Struggle for Lasting Peace” by José Vela Zanetti, displayed in the Conference Building at United Nations Headquarters.



The International Court of Justice holds a public hearing at the Peace Palace in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

(The Hague; April 2024)
© UN Photo/Frank van Beek

Context

The purposes and principles of the United Nations are enshrined in the first two Articles of its Charter, which include the maintenance of international peace and security and the peaceful settlement of disputes in conformity with the principles of justice and international law. Those principles are the foundation upon which the international community cooperates.

Our goals

The United Nations promotes justice and international law through its actions and mandates, including those related to international trade, oceans and the law of the sea, treaties and international agreements, peace operations, international tribunals and other international accountability mechanisms and sanctions. In addition, the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, settles legal disputes submitted by States and provides advisory opinions on legal questions.



“International law has never been more necessary or central than today. Standing up for norms and principles is at the core of what the UN is and does in these challenging times.”

Elinor Hammar-skjöld,
Under-Secretary-General for
Legal Affairs and United Nations
Legal Counsel

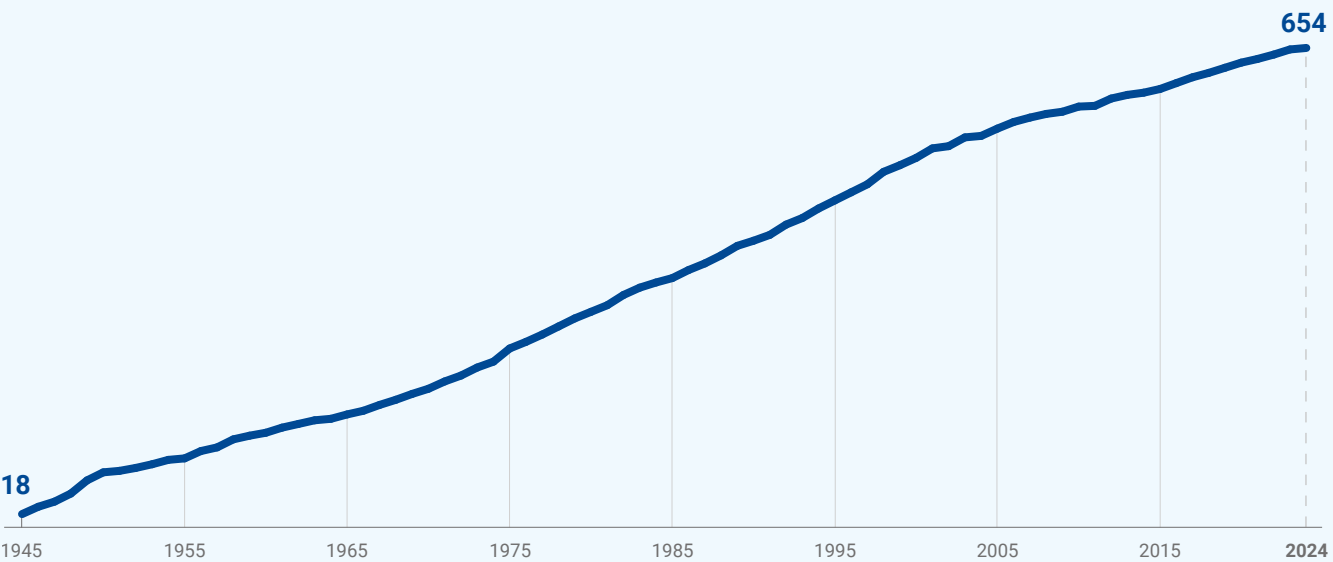
Our achievements

The International Court of Justice considered a number of cases in 2024. It delivered judgments on the preliminary objections in the proceedings concerning *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)* and the cases *Armenia v. Azerbaijan* and *Azerbaijan v. Armenia*. In the proceedings concerning *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*, it indicated additional provisional measures. It also decided on the admissibility of the declarations of intervention in the case concerning *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar: 7 States intervening)*.

The Court delivered an advisory opinion on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested by the General Assembly.

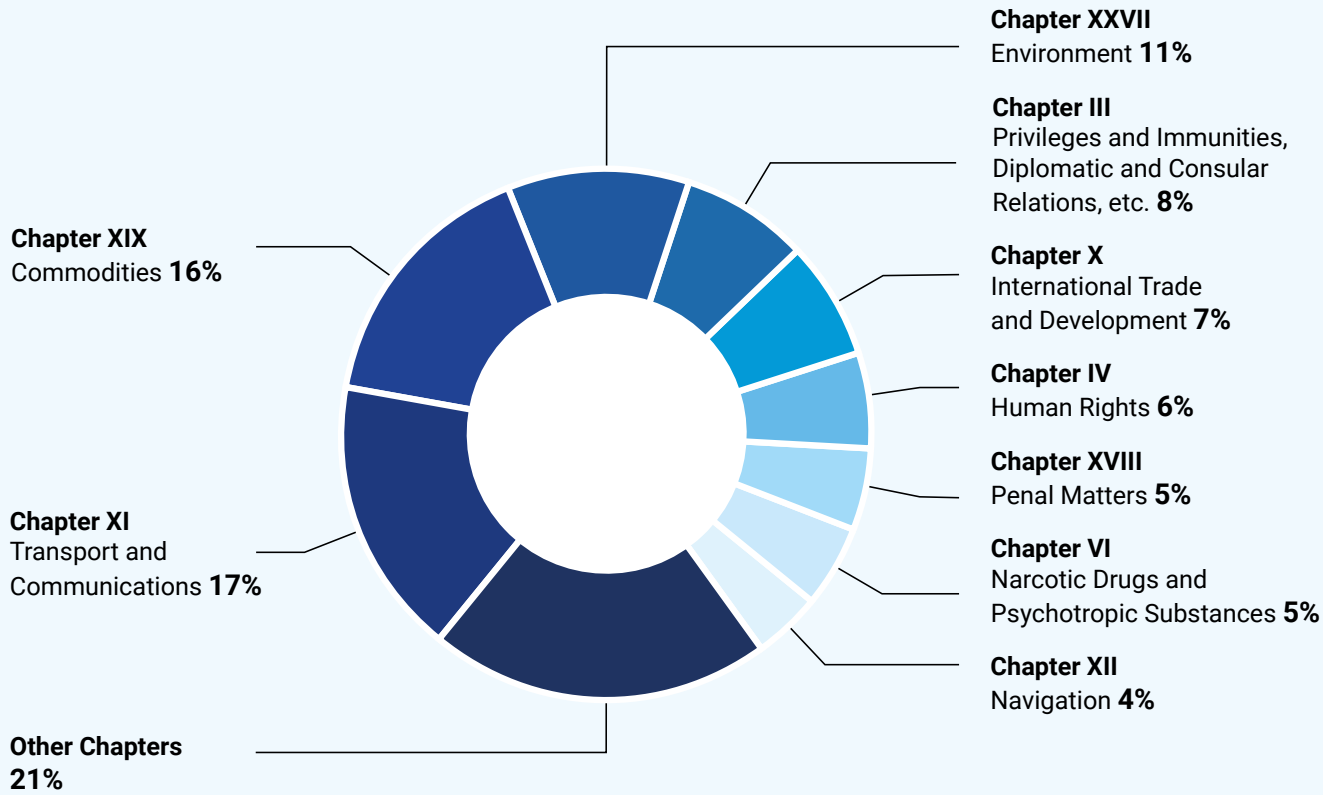
The Court also held public hearings at the request of the General Assembly for an advisory opinion on the obligations of States in respect of climate change, in which 96 States and 11 international organizations participated.

Rising number of multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General



Multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General address matters of worldwide interest

Multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General, proportion by Chapter (as of March 2025)



In December 2024, the General Assembly requested an advisory opinion from the Court on the obligations of Israel in relation to the presence and activities of the United Nations, other international organizations and third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Secretariat transmitted to the Court a dossier of documents to assist with the question posed by the General Assembly.

In September 2024, the mandate of the Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant concluded.