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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY MEETING: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE 28 October 2021

Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ)

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Thank you Mr Vice President,

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, as well as my own country, Australia.

CANZ would like to thank the President of the International Court of Justice for her report on the work of the Court over the past year. Thank you also for your kind words about the late Australian Judge James Crawford. And I thank the President of the General Assembly for his own tribute.

Mr Vice President,

CANZ reaffirms our strong support for the critical role played by the Court in facilitating the peaceful settlement of disputes between States, and maintaining and promoting the rule of law throughout the world.

The Court is a crucial cornerstone in the international rules-based order, which offers our best prospect of achieving global peace and security.

Mr Vice President,

Over the last 20 years, the Court's workload has grown considerably.

But the willingness of States to entrust the Court with their disputes reflects the strength of their confidence in the Court's independence, in the expertise and integrity of its judges and the rigour of its proceedings, and the Court's institutional significance as a mechanism for States to resolve their disputes peacefully.

CANZ acknowledges the Court's resilience in the face of the challenges posed to the functioning of the Court by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CANZ commends the Court for adapting its working methods to enable it to continue to perform its judicial functions during the pandemic.

The Court's ability to continue with its important work demonstrates the flexibility, dedication and commitment of its members and staff.

Mr Vice President,

Our acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court reflects the importance that CANZ attaches to the role of the Court and to the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law.

CANZ encourages States to turn to the Court to resolve their disputes, and is convinced that acceptance of the Court's compulsory jurisdiction by the widest possible number of States enables the Court to most effectively fulfil its role.

In this regard, CANZ urges States that have not yet done so to deposit with the Secretary-General a declaration of acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court.

CANZ also wishes to highlight that the implementation of binding judgments of the Court is essential to ensuring the final resolution of disputes, and reinforcing a judicial system that is of benefit to all Member States.

Mr Vice President,

The Court's authority and the quality of its judgments are enriched by the diversity of those that serve on its bench.

It is therefore notable, in 2021, that over the Court's 76-year history, there have only been four women appointed as permanent Judges of the Court, compared with 105 men.

In this regard, we are proud that the National Groups of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, alongside twelve others from across Europe, Africa and the Asia-Pacific, have nominated an exceptional jurist, Professor Hilary Charlesworth, as candidate for election to the Court on 5 November to fill the vacancy arising from Judge Crawford's passing.

Thank you.