Mr. President,

I would like to thank Judge Hisashi Owada, President of the International Court of Justice, for his comprehensive and detailed report, covering the judicial activities of the Court over the last year. I also thank him and Vice-President Judge Tomka for their leadership of the Court over that period.

India attaches the highest importance to the Court as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The peaceful resolution of disputes is fundamental for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Court has fulfilled that task admirably since its establishment and has acquired a well deserved reputation as an impartial institution with the highest legal standards, in accordance with its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations.

The Court remains the only judicial body with legitimacy derived from the UN Charter and enjoying universal character with general jurisdiction, whereas other international
judicial institutions have competence and jurisdiction in specific areas only. The Statute of the ICJ is an integral part of the UN Charter. This is a unique status enjoyed by the ICJ among the international courts or tribunals.

One of the primary goals of the United Nations, as stated in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter, is to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations of international law can be maintained. The International court of Justice, as the only international Court with general international law jurisdiction, is uniquely placed to fulfill that role.

The report of the Court clearly illustrates the confidence that States have in the Court, as shown by the number and scope of cases entrusted to it and the Court’s growing specialization in complex aspects of public international law. This clearly illustrates the universality of the Court and the great importance that Member States attach to it. I am especially glad to see that the Court’s docket of pending cases has grown consistently in recent years and now stand at 17 cases, involving more than 30 different States, as well as one request for an Advisory Opinion, as Judge Owada mentioned. The variety of the subject matter of recent cases, from territorial and maritime disputes to the obligation to prosecute or extradite, also demonstrates the significant role played by the Court in solving international disputes between States and providing its opinion on important questions of international law.

Mr. President,

The judgments delivered by the ICJ have played an important role in the interpretation and clarification of rules of international law as well as in the progressive development and codification of international law. In the performance of its judicial functions, the Court has remained highly sensitive in respecting political realities and sentiments of States, while acting within the provisions of the UN Charter, its own Statute and other applicable international law. The Court has contributed significantly towards settling legal disputes between Sovereign States, thus promoting the rule of law in international relations.

The Court has, since its inception, dealt with a variety of complex legal issues. It has pronounced judgments in areas covering territorial and maritime delimitation, diplomatic protection, environmental concerns, racial discrimination, violation of human rights and interpretation and application of international treaties and conventions.

The Court’s second function, of providing advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by organs of the United Nations and specialized agencies, continues to fulfill the important role of clarifying key international law issues.

Mr. President,
It is praiseworthy to note that the Court has taken significant steps over recent years to enhance its efficiency to cope with the steady increase in its workload including *inter-alia* re-examination of its procedures and working methods, updating of its practice directions for use by the States appearing before it and, setting a particularly demanding schedule of hearings and deliberations in order that the Court may consider several cases at the same time. As a result, we are happy to note that the Court has successfully cleared its backlog of cases, which has the effect of further strengthening the confidence of States in the Court’s competency and efficiency.

Mr. President,

In concluding my remarks, I wish to reiterate the great importance the international community attaches to the work of the International Court of Justice and to draw the Assembly’s attention to the importance of strengthening the functioning of the Court, including the provision of additional staff, as requested by the Court. India reaffirms its strong support for the International Court of Justice.

Thank You, Mr. President.