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OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

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of the UN General Assembly

jointly organized by the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations

and

the Asian African Legal Consultative Organization

“International Law in Global Climate Governance: Implementation and  
Outlook”

Keynote address

by

Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares

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

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It is my pleasure to be addressing all of you today at this important event. Today's topic, “International Law in Global Climate Governance: Implementation and Outlook”, could not be more timely.

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What began in 1972 as declarations and principles at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, which called for the protection and improvement of the human environment, have evolved. Today, Member States have committed to binding legal obligations under international law to limit, reduce and combat the negative effects of climate change.

One of the issues up for discussion today is the recent trend to submit requests for advisory opinions to international courts and tribunals on obligations under some of these legally binding instruments. This includes the request submitted to the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which I will touch on.

I will first discuss the request by the General Assembly for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, which all of you are aware.

On 29 March 2023, the General Assembly adopted resolution 77/276, requesting an advisory opinion of the ICJ on the obligations of States in respect of climate change. This resolution was historically sponsored by over 130 Member States, and adopted by consensus, reflecting the common concerns faced by majority of UN Member States.

I am sure that all of you have carefully studied the question that the General Assembly has asked the Court.

In this process, the UN Secretary-General has a specific function, as provided under the UN Charter and the Statute of the ICJ. Under Article 65 of the ICJ Statute, following a request for an advisory opinion to the Court, the Secretary-General provides the Court with a dossier containing all documents likely to throw light upon the question.

In line with past practice, the Office of Legal Affairs prepared the dossier, which was submitted to the Court on 30 June 2023.





The process of selecting the relevant documents was challenging.

It is now widely accepted that climate change impacts other areas of human activity and that there are many interconnected issues. Today, it is not possible to consider other issues, such as sustainable development, human rights including





documents related not only to the climate system and other parts of the environment, but also law of the sea and human rights.

As the Secretary General stated in the General Assembly on the occasion of the



