

Seventy-fifth session
Item 152 of the preliminary list*
Administration of justice at the United Nations

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**

**Introduction of the report of the Secretary-General on administration of justice
([A/75/162](#) and [A/75/162/Add.1](#))**

Distinguished Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on the formal system of administration of justice in 2019 and the addendum before this distinguished committee. The report provides information on the formal elements of the system and responds to requests of the General Assembly in resolutions [73/276](#) and [74/258](#). The addendum provides comments by counsel for the respondent and the Office of Staff Legal Assistance on the Rules of Procedure amended by the Dispute Tribunal.

As in previous years, the report was coordinated by the Office of Administration of Justice and includes input from the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, the Principal Registrar, the Management Evaluation Unit, the Appeals and Accountability Section of the Office of Human Resources, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Department of Operational Support, the Ethics Office, Offices away from Headquarters, participating Funds and Programmes, and the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services.

I am pleased to report that the system continues to operate well.

The 2019 reporting year marked several important events: (1) ten years since the system was established, (2) the addition of four new half-time judicial positions in the Dispute Tribunal in lieu of three ad litem positions.

(1) The 10th year of the system was marked with the publication “Digest of Case Law 2009-2019”.¹ The Digest was prepared by the Office of Administration of Justice in recognition of some key achievements of the formal part of the system over the last decade and includes summaries of key judgments and orders delivered by Dispute Tribunal and the Appeals Tribunal from 2009-2019.

(2) The new composition of the Dispute Tribunal, decided by the General Assembly in resolution [73/276](#), took full effect on 10 July 2019, when four new half-time judges were appointed. The increase from two half-time positions to six required systematic planning to ensure a seamless transition and continued smooth operation of the Tribunal. Despite initial adjustments, and while it is too early for a conclusive assessment, preliminary observations suggest a positive experience with the new structure of the Tribunal, as described in paragraphs 128-129 of the [report](#). It is also noted

* [A/75/50](#).

¹ Available on the website of the internal justice system: <https://www.un.org/en/internaljustice/assets/pdf/E-OAJ%20Jurisprudential%20Digest%20WEB%202009-2019.pdf> (in English) and <https://www.un.org/fr/internaljustice/assets/pdf/F-OAJ-Jurisprudential-Digest-WEB-2009-2019.pdf> (in French).

that the newly composed Dispute Tribunal continued to implement the case disposal plan mandated in resolution [73/276](#) and increased the number of case disposals in 2019 compared to the three previous years.

The incoming caseload of all elements of the formal system continued to be steady, although some fluctuations were observed, such as a decrease in the number of management evaluation requests received and an increased number of appeals before the Appeals Tribunal.

Informal resolution of disputes remained the focus of all concerned offices. In 2019, the overwhelming majority of requests for management evaluation submitted in the Secretariat (78 per cent) did not proceed to the Dispute Tribunal. This confirms that the management evaluation function continues to play a critical role in providing resolution to disputes. Similarly, in 2019, the Office of Staff Legal Assistance received 1,978 new requests for assistance and closed 70 per cent of those requests through summary advice, informal settlement, or by OSLA determining that legal proceedings would not have a reasonable prospect of success. Counsel for the respondent have also supported informal resolution of disputes.

The reporting period was also marked by regulatory activity: a) The Secretary-General prepared recommendations on the conditions of service and appointment requirements of the Internal Justice Council, as requested in General Assembly resolution [74/258](#); b) The Secretary-General also proposed amendments to the Statute of the Appeals Tribunal concerning the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund; c) The Appeals Tribunal amended its rules of procedure; d) The Dispute Tribunal also amended its rules of procedure. The addendum to the Secretary-General's report provides comments by counsel for the respondent and the Office of Staff Legal Assistance on the amended rules of procedure of the Dispute Tribunal. These above documents have been submitted for the General Assembly's approval through the Secretary-General's report and addendum ([A/75/162](#) and [A/75/162/Add.1](#)).

The challenging financial liquidity situation faced by the Organization in 2019, which continued in 2020, impacted the formal elements of the administration of justice system. These were notable through restrictions on recruitment for positions in the Dispute Tribunal registry and the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, and reduced allotments for mandate implementation in support provided to the Tribunals, as elaborated in paragraphs 131-133 of the [report](#).

The financial situation intersected with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, presenting various challenging circumstances for the Tribunals, the registries, litigants and counsel offices. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the resilience and unfailing commitment to the justice system of the Tribunals, staff in the registries, counsel for applicants and for the respondent who contributed to the transition to remote work arrangements, despite the trying circumstances. The Dispute Tribunal has maintained its schedule of work, steadily increasing the number of judgments issued, and disposing of cases; the Appeals Tribunal, fully supported by the registry, has held all of the 2020 sessions virtually, while maintaining a rate of disposal of appeals consistent with prior years.

Distinguished Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

My colleagues and I are grateful for your support to the internal justice system and remain available to assist in your consideration of the Secretary-General's report and addendum.