

Seventy-sixth session
Item 149 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/76/99](#))

Distinguished Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on the administration of justice in 2020 before this distinguished committee. The report provides information on the formal elements of the system and responds to requests of the General Assembly in resolution [75/248](#).

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 Administrative Law Division in the Office of Human Resources, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Ethics Office, Offices away from Headquarters, participating Funds and Programmes, and the United Nations Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services.

2020 was marked by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated an unprecedented change in the operation of the various elements of the justice system. This reporting period also marked the first full year that the Dispute Tribunal was operating with the new structure of three full-time and six half-time judges. The system proved its resilience by transitioning to remote operations, as necessitated by lockdowns and health concerns.

The judges of the Tribunals, staff in the registries supporting the Tribunals, counsel for the parties and all stakeholders demonstrated a firm commitment to ensuring that the system continued to function effectively, notwithstanding the challenges that were encountered.

I am pleased to report that programme delivery was maintained, with outputs exceeding those of prior periods, in some areas:

- The Dispute Tribunal delivered 221 judgments in 2020, compared to 159 in 2019, 128 in 2018 and 100 in 2017. The Dispute Tribunal also reduced the backlog of cases older than 400 days, from 205 such cases as of 31 December 2018, to 69 on 31 December 2020.
- The Appeals Tribunal held three virtual sessions, delivered 100 judgments, and disposed of 118 appeals, representing an increase over 2019, when it delivered 82 judgments and 95 disposals.

· In the Management Evaluation Unit, of the 404 requests received in 2020 in the Secretariat, 371 were closed by 31 December 2020, which is consistent with the output in previous years.

· For the reporting period, the Office of Staff Legal Assistance received 1,728 new requests for assistance and closed 891 requests through settlement or otherwise.

During the reporting period, the Office of Administration of Justice continued implementation of the comprehensive outreach strategy, as urged by the General Assembly in resolution [75/248](#).

Expanding on the 2019 Digest of key judgments delivered by the Tribunals in the first ten years of the system, the Office commenced building a fully searchable caselaw database in which all Dispute and Appeals Tribunal judgments and orders will be categorized, and key judgments accompanied by a summary. The summaries will extrapolate key findings and legal principles. The database is expected to be a key resource for staff members, managers, human resources practitioners, parties appearing before the Tribunals and stakeholders, to support access to the jurisprudence and better inform decision-making. It will also enable better data analysis and the identification of trends in the operation of the system. The project is in its final stage and is expected to go live by the end of 2021.

Lastly, I bring to the distinguished committee's attention the proposed amended statute of the Appeals Tribunal ([A/76/99](#), paras. 87-104, 116(c)), the amended rules of procedure of the Appeals Tribunal ([A/76/99](#), paras. 114-115, 116(e) and Annex I, and [A/75/162](#), Annex I), and the request for extension of the voluntary supplemental funding mechanism for the Office of Staff Legal Assistance ([A/76/99](#), paras. 85-86 and 116(b)), submitted for the General Assembly's approval. The extension of the supplemental funding by voluntary staff contributions, as established in resolution [68/254](#), would ensure meaningful legal assistance to staff and support access to justice, as one of the critical cornerstones the system.

Distinguished Chair,
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 these reports.