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Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its seventy-first session

Report of the Sixth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Mohamed Hamad **Al-Thani** (Qatar)

I. Introduction

1. The item entitled “Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its seventy-first session” was included in the provisional agenda of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly pursuant to Assembly resolution [73/265](#) of 22 December 2018.
2. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2019, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the Sixth Committee.
3. The Sixth Committee considered the item at its 23rd to 33rd and 35th meetings, from 28 October to 1 November and on 5, 6 and 20 November 2019. The views of the representatives who spoke during the Committee’s consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary records.¹
4. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the International Law Commission on the work of its seventy-first session ([A/74/10](#)).
5. The Chair of the International Law Commission at its seventy-first session introduced the report of the Commission on the work of that session at the 23rd meeting, on 28 October, and the Committee considered the report in three clusters, namely: cluster I (chapters I to V and XI) at its 23rd to 28th meetings, from 28 October to 1 November, cluster II (chapters VI, VIII and X) at its 28th to 31st meetings, on 1 and 5 November, and cluster III (chapters VII and IX) at its 31st, 32nd and 33rd meetings, on 5 and 6 November.

¹ [A/C.6/74/SR.23](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.24](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.25](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.26](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.27](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.28](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.29](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.30](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.31](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.32](#), [A/C.6/74/SR.33](#) and [A/C.6/74/SR.35](#).



II. Consideration of proposals

A. Draft resolution [A/C.6/74/L.20](#)

6. At the 35th meeting, on 20 November, the representative of Colombia, on behalf of the Bureau, introduced a draft resolution entitled “Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its seventy-first session” ([A/C.6/74/L.20](#)).

7. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution [A/C.6/74/L.20](#) without a vote (see para. 11, draft resolution I).

B. Draft resolution [A/C.6/74/L.21](#)

8. At the 35th meeting, on 20 November, the representative of Singapore, on behalf of the Bureau, introduced a draft resolution entitled “Crimes against humanity” ([A/C.6/74/L.21](#)).

9. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution [A/C.6/74/L.21](#) without a vote (see para. 11, draft resolution II).

10. After the adoption of the draft resolution, the representative of Austria, on behalf of Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, the Gambia, Germany, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay, made a statement in explanation of position.

III. Recommendation of the Sixth Committee

11. The Sixth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution I

Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its seventy-first session

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the International Law Commission on the work of its seventy-first session,¹

Emphasizing the importance of furthering the progressive development and codification of international law as a means of implementing the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,²

Recognizing the desirability of referring legal and drafting questions to the Sixth Committee, including topics that might be submitted to the International Law Commission for closer examination, and of enabling the Sixth Committee and the Commission to enhance further their contribution to the progressive development and codification of international law,

Recalling the need to keep under review those topics of international law which, given their new or renewed interest for the international community, may be suitable for the progressive development and codification of international law and therefore may be included in the future programme of work of the International Law Commission,

Recalling also the role of Member States in submitting proposals for new topics for the consideration of the International Law Commission, and noting in this regard the recommendation of the Commission that such proposals be accompanied by a statement of reasons,

Reaffirming the importance for the successful work of the International Law Commission of the information provided by Member States concerning their views and practice,

Recognizing the importance of the work of the special rapporteurs of the International Law Commission,

Welcoming the holding of the International Law Seminar, and noting with appreciation the voluntary contributions made to the United Nations trust fund for the International Law Seminar,

Acknowledging the importance of facilitating the timely publication of the *Yearbook of the International Law Commission* and of eliminating the backlog,

Stressing the usefulness of focusing and structuring the debate on the report of the International Law Commission in the Sixth Committee in such a manner that conditions are provided for concentrated attention to each of the main topics dealt with in the report and for discussions on specific topics,

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-fourth Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/74/10).*

² Resolution 2625 (XXV), annex.

Wishing to enhance further, in the context of the revitalization of the debate on the report of the International Law Commission, the interaction between the Sixth Committee as a body of governmental representatives and the Commission as a body of independent legal experts, with a view to improving the dialogue between the two bodies,

Welcoming initiatives to hold interactive debates, panel discussions and question time in the Sixth Committee, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004 on further measures for the revitalization of the work of the Assembly,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the International Law Commission on the work of its seventy-first session;¹

2. *Expresses its appreciation* to the International Law Commission for the work accomplished at its seventy-first session, and notes in particular:

(a) The completion of the second reading of the draft articles on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity;³

(b) The completion of the first reading of the draft conclusions on peremptory norms of general international law (*jus cogens*);⁴

(c) The completion of the first reading of the draft principles on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts;⁵

3. *Recommends* that the International Law Commission continue its work on the topics in its current programme of work, taking into account the comments and observations of Governments, whether submitted in writing or expressed orally in debates in the Sixth Committee;

4. *Draws the attention* of Governments to the importance for the International Law Commission of having their views by 31 December 2019 on the various aspects of the topics on the agenda of the Commission, in particular on all the specific issues identified in chapter III of its report, regarding:

(a) Immunity of State officials from foreign criminal jurisdiction;

(b) Succession of States in respect of State responsibility;

(c) General principles of law;

(d) Sea-level rise in relation to international law;

5. *Also draws the attention* of Governments to the importance for the International Law Commission of having their comments and observations by 15 December 2019 on the draft guidelines on the protection of the atmosphere and on the draft Guide to Provisional Application of Treaties, adopted on first reading by the Commission at its seventieth session,⁶ including comments and observations on the draft model clauses on provisional application of treaties, contained in annex A to the report of the Commission on the work of its seventy-first session;⁷

6. *Takes note* of the decision of the International Law Commission to include the topic “Sea-level rise in relation to international law” in its programme of work,⁸

³ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-fourth Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/74/10)*, chap. IV, sect. E.

⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. V, sect. C.

⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. VI, sect. C.

⁶ *Ibid.*, *Seventy-third Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/73/10)*, paras. 76 and 88.

⁷ *Seventy-fourth Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/74/10)*, annex A.

⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 285.

and encourages the Commission to continue the examination of the topics that are in its long-term programme of work;⁹

7. *Encourages* the International Law Commission to take particular account of the capacity and views of Member States, as well as of the workload of the Commission, when including topics in its current programme of work;

8. *Takes note* of paragraphs 289 to 291 of the report of the International Law Commission and notes, in particular, the inclusion of the topics “Reparation to individuals for gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law” and “Prevention and repression of piracy and armed robbery at sea” in the long-term programme of work of the Commission,¹⁰ and in this regard calls upon the Commission to take into consideration the comments, concerns and observations expressed by Governments during the debate in the Sixth Committee;

9. *Takes note* of paragraph 302 of the report of the International Law Commission, and requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to identify concrete options for support for the work of special rapporteurs, additional to those provided under General Assembly resolution [56/272](#) of 27 March 2002;

10. *Reiterates* its appreciation of the efforts of the International Law Commission to improve its methods of work,¹¹ and encourages the Commission to continue this practice;

11. *Invites* the International Law Commission to continue to take measures to enhance its efficiency and productivity and to consider making proposals to Member States to that end;

12. *Recalls* the importance of an in-depth analysis of State practice and the consideration of the diversity of legal systems of Member States to the work of the International Law Commission;

13. *Takes note* of paragraph 306 of the report of the International Law Commission, recalls the paramount importance of multilingualism as set forth in General Assembly resolutions [69/324](#) of 11 September 2015 and [71/328](#) of 11 September 2017 on multilingualism, underlines the importance of having the documents of the Commission published in due time in the six official languages of the United Nations while ensuring their accuracy in all official languages, and to this end requests special rapporteurs to submit their reports within the time limits specified by the Secretariat, and the Secretariat to give due consideration to the quality of the translation of the documents of the Commission in the six official languages;

14. *Encourages* the International Law Commission to continue to take cost-saving measures at its future sessions, without prejudice to the efficiency and effectiveness of its work;

⁹ The following topics are currently in the long-term programme of work of the International Law Commission: “Ownership and protection of wrecks beyond the limits of national maritime jurisdiction”, “Jurisdictional immunity of international organizations”, “Protection of personal data in transborder flow of information”, “Extraterritorial jurisdiction”, “The fair and equitable treatment standard in international investment law”, “Settlement of international disputes to which international organizations are parties”, “Evidence before international courts and tribunals”, “Universal criminal jurisdiction”, “Reparation to individuals for gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law” and “Prevention and repression of piracy and armed robbery at sea”.

¹⁰ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-fourth Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/74/10)*, para. 290.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *Sixty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/66/10)*, paras. 370–388.

15. *Recalls* that the seat of the International Law Commission is at the United Nations Office at Geneva;

16. *Takes note* of paragraph 313 of the report of the International Law Commission, and decides that the next session of the Commission shall be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 27 April to 5 June and from 6 July to 7 August 2020;

17. *Stresses* the desirability of further enhancing the dialogue between the International Law Commission, in particular the special rapporteurs, and the Sixth Committee, and in this context encourages, inter alia, the continued practice of informal consultations in the form of discussions between the members of the Sixth Committee and the members of the Commission throughout the year;

18. *Encourages* delegations, during the debate on the report of the International Law Commission, to continue to adhere as far as possible to the structured work programme agreed to by the Sixth Committee and to consider presenting concise and focused statements;

19. *Encourages* Member States to consider being represented at the level of legal adviser during the first week in which the report of the International Law Commission is discussed in the Sixth Committee (International Law Week) to enable high-level discussions on issues of international law;

20. *Underlines* in this regard the necessity to allow sufficient time for the consideration of the report of the International Law Commission in the Sixth Committee;

21. *Requests* the International Law Commission to continue to pay special attention to indicating in its annual report, for each topic, any specific issues on which expressions of views by Governments, either in the Sixth Committee or in written form, would be of particular interest in providing effective guidance for the Commission in its further work;

22. *Takes note* of paragraphs 314 to 319 of the report of the International Law Commission with regard to cooperation and interaction with other bodies, and encourages the Commission to continue the implementation of articles 16 (e), 25 and 26 of its statute in order to further strengthen cooperation between the Commission and other bodies concerned with international law, having in mind the usefulness of such cooperation;

23. *Notes* that consulting with national organizations and individual experts concerned with international law may assist Governments in considering whether to make comments and observations on drafts submitted by the International Law Commission and in formulating their comments and observations;

24. *Reaffirms* its previous decisions concerning the indispensable role of the Codification Division of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat in providing assistance to the International Law Commission, including in the preparation of memorandums and studies on topics on the agenda of the Commission, and takes note of the request of the Commission to the Secretariat to prepare a memorandum surveying the case law of inter-State arbitral tribunals and international criminal courts and tribunals of a universal character, as well as treaties, which would be particularly relevant for its future work on the topic "General principles of law" contained in paragraph 286 of the report of the Commission;

25. *Also reaffirms* its previous decisions concerning the documentation and summary records of the International Law Commission;¹²

26. *Stresses* the need to expedite the preparation of the summary records of the International Law Commission, and welcomes the continuation of the measures taken to streamline the processing of summary records during the sixty-fifth session of the Commission,¹³ which have led to a more rational use of resources, and expresses its satisfaction that the summary records of the Commission, constituting *travaux préparatoires* in the progressive development and codification of international law, will not be subject to arbitrary length restrictions;

27. *Welcomes* the institutionalization of the practice of the Secretariat to include on the website of the International Law Commission the provisional summary records in English and French relating to the work of the Commission;

28. *Also welcomes* the efforts of the Secretariat in seeking to ensure the timely and efficient processing of the documents of the International Law Commission and the institutionalization of the experimental measures taken during the sixty-eighth session of the Commission to streamline the editing of those documents;

29. *Takes note* of paragraph 303 of the report of the International Law Commission, underlines the importance of the publications of the Codification Division to the work of the Commission, welcomes in particular the issuance of the ninth edition of *The Work of the International Law Commission* in Chinese, Russian and Spanish, and reiterates its request that the Secretary-General continue to publish *The Work of the International Law Commission* in all six official languages at the beginning of each quinquennium, the *Reports of International Arbitral Awards* in English or French and the *Summaries of the Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders of the International Court of Justice* in all six official languages every five years;

30. *Also takes note* of paragraph 308 of the report of the International Law Commission, stresses the unique value of the *Yearbook of the International Law Commission*, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure its timely publication in all official languages;

31. *Expresses its appreciation* to Governments that have made voluntary contributions to the trust fund on the backlog relating to the *Yearbook of the International Law Commission*, and encourages further contributions to the trust fund;

32. *Takes note* of paragraph 309 of the report of the International Law Commission, expresses its satisfaction with the remarkable progress achieved in the past few years in reducing the backlog of the *Yearbook of the International Law Commission* in all six languages, welcomes the efforts made by the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva, especially its Editing Section, in effectively implementing relevant resolutions of the General Assembly calling for the reduction of the backlog, encourages that Division to provide continuous necessary support to the Editing Section in advancing the *Yearbook of the International Law Commission*, and requests that updates on progress made in this respect be provided to the Commission on a regular basis;

¹² See resolutions 32/151, para. 10, and 37/111, para. 5, and all subsequent resolutions on the annual reports of the International Law Commission to the General Assembly; see also *Yearbook of the International Law Commission* 1982, vol. II (Part Two), paras. 267–269 and 271, as well as all subsequent annual reports of the International Law Commission.

¹³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/68/10)*, para. 183.

33. *Welcomes* the continuous efforts of the Codification Division to maintain and improve the website relating to the work of the International Law Commission;

34. *Expresses the hope* that the International Law Seminar will continue to be held in connection with the sessions of the International Law Commission and that an increasing number of participants representing the principal legal systems of the world, including in particular those from developing countries, will be given the opportunity to attend the Seminar, as well as delegates to the Sixth Committee, and appeals to States to continue to make urgently needed voluntary contributions to the United Nations trust fund for the International Law Seminar;

35. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide the International Law Seminar with adequate services, including interpretation, as required, and encourages him to continue to consider ways to improve the structure and content of the Seminar;

36. *Underlines* the importance of the records and topical summary of the debate in the Sixth Committee for the deliberations of the International Law Commission, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General to forward to the Commission, for its attention, the records of the debate on the report of the Commission at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, together with such written statements as delegations may circulate in conjunction with their oral statements, and to prepare and distribute a topical summary of the debate, following established practice;

37. *Requests* the Secretariat to circulate to States, as soon as possible after the conclusion of the session of the International Law Commission, chapter II of its report containing a summary of the work of that session, chapter III containing the specific issues on which the views of Governments would be of particular interest to the Commission and the draft articles adopted on either first or second reading by the Commission;

38. *Also requests* the Secretariat to make the complete report of the International Law Commission available as soon as possible after the conclusion of the session of the Commission for the consideration of Member States with due anticipation and no later than the prescribed time limit for reports in the General Assembly;

39. *Encourages* the International Law Commission to continue to consider ways in which specific issues on which the views of Governments would be of particular interest to the Commission could be framed so as to help Governments to have a better appreciation of the issues on which responses are required;

40. *Recommends* that the debate on the report of the International Law Commission at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly commence on 26 October 2020.

Draft resolution II

Crimes against humanity

The General Assembly,

Having considered chapter IV of the report of the International Law Commission on the work of its seventy-first session,¹ which contains the draft articles on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity,

Noting that the Commission decided to recommend the draft articles on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity to the General Assembly and recommended the elaboration of a convention by the Assembly or by an international conference of plenipotentiaries on the basis of the draft articles,²

Emphasizing the continuing importance of the codification and progressive development of international law, as referred to in Article 13, paragraph 1 (a), of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recognizing the need to prevent and punish crimes against humanity, which are among the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole,

1. *Expresses its appreciation* to the International Law Commission for its continuing contribution to the codification and progressive development of international law;

2. *Takes note* of the draft articles on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity, presented by the Commission;³

3. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-fifth session an item entitled “Crimes against humanity” and to continue to examine the recommendation of the Commission contained in paragraph 42 of its report on the work of its seventy-first session.¹

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-fourth Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/74/10).*

² *Ibid.*, para. 42.

³ *Ibid.*, chap. IV, sect. E.