Statement by H.E. Mr. Motohide Yoshikawa  
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On Agenda Item 70: Report of the International Court of Justice  
United Nations General Assembly  
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Mr. President of the General Assembly,  
Mr. President of the International Court of Justice,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank President Peter Tomka for his leadership as well as for his comprehensive report on the work of the Court.

As Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan emphasized at this podium two years in a row, the rule of law is one of the most important aspects of Japan’s foreign policy. Japan attaches particular importance to activities of the ICJ, the principal judicial organ enshrined in the UN Charter. I appreciate the role it has played to enhance the rule of law in the international community.

Mr. President,

International law provides parties concerned with a common language. We hear mounting expectations across the globe for international law to serve as a device to disentangle the tensions of heated controversies. Cases referred to the Court involve a wide variety of subject matters, including territorial and maritime disputes, economic and environmental disputes, and violation related to international humanitarian and human rights law. Despite the fact that the Court has been dealing with more complex cases in factual and legal terms, I appreciate that the Court maintains its high quality work.

Mr. President,

Japan strongly believes that more and more countries concerned should recognize the importance of international law, and make good use of the ICJ.
For example, universal acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 2, of the ICJ Statute would enhance the function of the Court. Japan already in 1958 unilaterally accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ. The situation concerning the acceptance of the jurisdiction of the Court is, however, very poor. Only 70 out of the entire membership of the United Nations have accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ. Looking at the Asia-Pacific Group which Japan belongs to, only 7 out of 54 countries have accepted it. I hope to see more countries, in particular, members of the Asia-Pacific Group do so.

In this context, Japan highly values the recent publication of "the Handbook on accepting the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice". Let me express my special gratitude to Switzerland for their leadership to compile the Handbook. My appreciation also goes to the other co-producers, namely the Netherlands, Uruguay, the United Kingdom, Lithuania and Botswana. Japan is proud to be among 7 co-producers.

Mr. President,

I would also like to take this opportunity to refer to Japan's experience in the peaceful settlement of disputes in the ICJ. It was an important year for Japan, as the Court delivered its Judgment in the case concerning Whaling in the Antarctic. Throughout the proceedings before the Court, Japan has made clear its position on the issues involved in the case in full respect of the procedures. The decision that Japan's whaling research program did not fall within the relevant Article of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling was disappointing, however, Japan abides by the Judgment of the Court. Japan will continue to pursue its policy on the sustainable use of marine living resources in accordance with international law and based upon scientific evidence, taking into account the reasoning and conclusions contained in the Judgment.

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to reiterate Japan's unwavering support for the International Court of Justice.

I thank you.