



## Launch of the Asser – ICJ Series

In the year of the 70th Anniversary of the International Court of Justice, the T.M.C. Asser Instituut has taken the initiative to organise a new series of lectures and seminars about the Court. The aim is to have at least four sessions per year, to be held at the premises of the T.M.C. Asser Instituut, on topics relevant to the mission and work of the Court. The sessions may be in English or in French, depending on the topic and/or speakers. To celebrate the launch of the series, H.E. Judge Ronny Abraham, President of the International Court of Justice, delivered the inaugural lecture in the Great Hall of Justice in the Peace Palace on 10 February 2016.

Prof. Dr. Ernst Hirsch Ballin, President of the T.M.C. Asser Instituut, provided a word of welcome to the attendees. He touched upon the connection between Tobias Asser, the name-giver of the T.M.C. Asser Instituut, and the International Court of Justice, before introducing the President of the International Court of Justice, H.E. Judge Ronny Abraham. Prof. Hirsch Ballin described Judge Abraham, who was elected to Court in 2005 and has been its President since 2015, as being at the pinnacle of the development of international law in a period of considerable conflict and upheaval in the world, a period in which we need judges to serve peace and universal human dignity.

H.E. Judge Ronny Abraham, who spoke in French (with English translation provided by interpreters), delivered the inaugural lecture on “The Role of States’ Consent in the Case Law of the International Court of Justice”. Judge Abraham emphasised the essential role of states’ consent, upon which the Court’s jurisdiction in contentious proceedings is based. He then briefly outlined the five ways in which consent to the Court’s jurisdiction can be granted, before comparing consensual and compulsory jurisdiction, noting that a strict separation between the two is difficult to maintain.

The Court itself decides upon questions regarding its jurisdiction, which it does in a manner that is as neutral as possible, seeking a middle ground between restrictive and proactive approaches. Judge Abraham illustrated the Court’s approach by reference to a number of cases, revealing how the intentions of states regarding declarations of consent are to be found and stressing the need for the Court to exercise its jurisdiction within the limits provided by the consent of states. Judge Abraham concluded by emphasising that while one could dream of an international society where courts do not have to rely on states’ consent, the International Court of Justice operates in the real world and applies the law as it is, in full respect of the provisions of its Statute.

The lecture was followed by a lively Q&A session, after which Dr. Olivier Ribbelink, Senior Researcher at the T.M.C. Asser Instituut and initiator of the Asser – ICJ Lecture Series, provided the closing speech, thanking Judge Abraham and the others involved, before outlining the purpose of the Series to which this event provided a celebratory start.

A recording of the lecture will be made available on the website of the T.M.C. Asser Instituut.