© The Author(s), 2026. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of American Society of International Law.
DOI:10.1017/ilm.2026.10163

BRIEFLY NOTED*

(Not reproduced in *International Legal Materials*)

Judicial and Similar Proceedings

1. UN General Assembly and Security Council Elect Phoebe Okowa to ICJ (November 12, 2025)

https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/press-releases/0/000-20251112-pre-01-00-en.pdf

On November 12, 2025, the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council elected Ms. Phoebe Okowa as a Member of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), with immediate effect. Ms. Okowa is of Kenyan nationality and succeeds Judge Abdulqawi A. Yusuf, who resigned from the Court effective September 30, 2025. Pursuant to Article 15 of the ICJ Statute, Ms. Okowa will serve for the remainder of Judge Yusuf's term, which is set to expire on February 5, 2027.

The election followed multiple rounds of concurrent but independent voting in the General Assembly and the Security Council, as required by Articles 8-11 of the ICJ Statute. While different candidates initially secured absolute majorities in the two organs, balloting continued until the same candidate prevailed in both. Ms. Okowa obtained the required absolute majority in the General Assembly and Security Council in the final round, resulting in her election to the Court.

2. Rwanda Initiates Arbitration Against United Kingdom Under Asylum Partnership Agreement

https://pca-cpa.org/en/news/pca-press-release-pca-case-no-2025-45-arbitration-pursuant-to-the-asylum-partnership-agreement-the-republic-of-rwanda-v-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland/

On January 30, 2026, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) announced the commencement of an arbitration between the Republic of Rwanda and the United Kingdom under the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the Provision of an Asylum Partnership to Strengthen Shared International Commitments on the Protection of Refugees and Migrants (Asylum Partnership Agreement).

According to the PCA announcement, Rwanda commenced the proceedings by Notice of Arbitration dated November 24, 2025, invoking Article 22 of the Asylum Partnership.

The dispute concerns alleged breaches by the United Kingdom of financial and resettlement obligations under the Agreement. Rwanda asserts that the United Kingdom requested it to forgo two £50 million payments due in April 2025 and April 2026 in anticipation of the treaty's termination, but that no agreement on revised terms was concluded and the amounts remain payable. Rwanda further claims that the United Kingdom has failed to honor commitments relating to the resettlement of vulnerable refugees from Rwanda. The United Kingdom has indicated it will contest Rwanda's position.

Resolutions, Declarations, and Other Documents

1. United States Announces Withdrawal from 66 International Organizations (January 7, 2026)

https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/01/withdrawal-from-wasteful-ineffective-or-harmful-international-organizations/

On January 7, 2026, the U.S. Department of State announced the withdrawal of the United States from 66 international organizations. The action followed Executive Order 14199 (Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations). The list of organizations from which the United States will withdraw was made public, and reviews of additional bodies remain ongoing.

According to the press statement, issued by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the organizations targeted for withdrawal were found to be redundant, mismanaged, ineffective, or advancing agendas viewed as inconsistent

*With thanks to Özge Karsu for her assistance in drafting these summaries.

https://doi.org/10.1017/ilm.2026.10163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with U.S. interests, sovereignty, or resource priorities. The announcement reflected a broader critique of multilateral engagement, stating that international organizations have shifted away from cooperation. The move is presented as part of a wider reassessment of U.S. participation in international institutions and the allocation of taxpayer funding abroad.

The United States will now initiate formal withdrawal procedures where required by treaty or institutional rules and may identify further organizations for withdrawal as the review process continues.

2. Policy on Cyber-Enabled Crimes under the Rome Statute (International Criminal Court – December 3, 2025)

https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2025-12/2025-cyber-eng.pdf

On December 3, 2025, the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued its Policy on Cyber-Enabled Crimes under the Rome Statute. This marks the first major policy response by an international prosecuting authority to the impact of new technologies on its mandate and provides the OTP's most comprehensive strategy for addressing how core international crimes may be committed or facilitated through cyber means.

The Policy affirms that the provisions of the Rome Statute applies fully to conducts that took place in cyberspace. The OTP states that the crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court—genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression—as well as offences against the administration of justice can be carried out wholly or partly through cyber means. It provides detailed discussion on how the requirements, specifically the material elements, of these crimes can be met where conduct takes place by cyber means or in cyberspace.

The Policy highlights the increasing importance of digital evidence, noting that electronic information is now central to the investigation process. It emphasizes that digital evidence raises unique challenges for collection, authentication, preservation, and security, and commits the OTP to strengthening its technical capacity. The Policy also addresses the growing role of artificial intelligence, recognizing its potential to facilitate international crimes and the need to understand how autonomous AI systems affect responsibility.

The Policy notes conformity with internationally recognized human rights; consistency; independence, objectivity and diligence; gravity, impact and practicality; and partnership and vigilance as the principles that guide the work of the OTP. It further raises several practical considerations, including the need to build expertise and training, and the importance of effective cooperation with state parties.

3. World Development Report Highlights Global Impact of Standards (World Bank – December 11, 2025)

https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2025?cid=ECR_TT_worldbank_EN_EXT

On December 11, 2025, the World Bank published "World Development Report 2025: Standards for Development." The Report provides a comprehensive assessment of standards and their role in accelerating economic development. It highlights the growing importance of technical and regulatory standards to economic growth and offers practical frameworks for countries at different stages of development.

The Report explains that modern trade depends less on tariffs and more on conformity with technical standards. By 2024, almost 90 percent of global trade is affected by nontariff measures, including product safety rules, environmental measurement criteria, and labeling requirements, compared to 15 percent in the 1990s. However, the Report also states the risks that increase global inequities caused by the rapid expansion of standards, such as the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism making several countries vulnerable.

The Report emphasizes that standards can serve as drivers. To help low- and middle-income countries navigate this shifting landscape, it proposes an "adapt–align–author" approach. Accordingly, countries should first adapt international standards to local industrial capacity, then align their frameworks with global norms as institutions mature, and participate in drafting standards through engagement in bodies.

Overall, the Report describes standards as tools for market trust and international cooperation. The standards are increasingly shaping development outcomes across multiple sectors, including trade, climate policy, emerging technologies, or financial systems.

https://doi.org/10.1017/ilm.2026.10163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

4. BBNJ Agreement Enters into Force (January 17, 2026)

https://treaties.un.org/PAGES/ViewDetails.aspx?chapter=21&clang=_en&mtdsg_no=XXI-10&src=TREATY

On January 17, 2026, the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction ("BBNJ Agreement") entered into force, becoming legally binding for the states that have ratified it.

The Agreement was adopted on June 19, 2023 by the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. Its entry into force was triggered once it received 60 ratifications and the 120-day countdown elapsed. Morocco was the 60th state to ratify the Agreement on September 19, 2025, starting the 120-day period leading to the entry into force.

The BBNJ Agreement creates a global framework to conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which comprise roughly two-thirds of the ocean. It is also the third implementing agreement to UNCLOS.

https://doi.org/10.1017/ilm.2026.10163 Published online by Cambridge University Press