

**Press conference
Press room, 28 January 2016**

Guido Raimondi, President of the European Court of Human Rights

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to this press conference, which, as is our tradition, is being held before the opening of the Court's judicial year tomorrow. As has been the case for a number of years now, it will be preceded by a seminar, the theme of which is particularly topical this year because it is entitled "International and national courts confronted with large-scale violations of human rights" with the sub-themes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and terrorism.

The two speakers at our seminar will be Mr Piotr Hofmanski, Judge at the International Criminal Court, and Aharon Barak, former President of the Supreme Court of Israel.

I wish to add that our guest of honour for tomorrow's solemn hearing will be Mr Andrzej Rzeplinski, President of the Polish Constitutional Court.

This week I have received a certain number of dignitaries, notably Mr Plevneliev, President of Bulgaria and Mr Çavuşoğlu, Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs. This afternoon we will be visited by the Captains Regent of San Marino, Ms Stefanelli and Mr Renzi, and the German Minister of Justice, Mr Maas.

In addition, I was received a few days ago by Mr François Hollande, President of France.

You have been given a file containing the Court's annual statistics. I know that you always examine them with great interest. You will also find USB keys containing a lot of useful information, including the annual statistics and the activity report for the year 2015.

On the subject of 2015, the Court continued to control the flow of the cases brought before it. In total, it decided over 45,000 cases. As you know, the elimination of the backlog of single-judge cases was one of the aims for 2015 and it was indeed fulfilled, because we now have less than 3,250 such cases pending. I hope that, very soon, we will dispose with similar efficiency of the 30,500 repetitive cases that are currently registered. We have the technical means to achieve that, but it will also depend on the capacity of the respondent States to deal with such cases.

The number of applications disposed of by a judgment remained high in 2015:

– it came to 2,441, up on 2,388 the previous year. At the end of 2014 we had about 70,000 applications pending. That figure fell to below 65,000 by the end of 2015, down 7%.

To complete that information, Ukraine is currently our highest case-count country with 13,850 applications, followed by Russia with 9,200, Turkey with 8,450, Italy with 7,550, and Hungary with 4,600.

In that connection it is important to emphasise that 2015 saw the virtual elimination of the single-judge case backlog. I should point out that in 2011 over 100,000 applications had been earmarked for allocation to a single judge. That figure now stands at 3,250. To reduce it was a major objective for the Court and it was achieved thanks to the work of the single judges and the methods implemented by the filtering section. Those methods will now be used to deal with repetitive cases, which currently represent almost half the pending cases (30,500 out of 64,850). This is one of the

challenges facing the Court in the coming years. The same is true for the priority cases, which now amount to 11,500. Lastly, the Court must also deal with the normal and non-repetitive cases, of which there were 19,600 at the end of 2015.

Another important point: at the High-Level Conference held in Brussels, the States expressly asked the Court to provide reasoning for single-judge decisions. Efforts have thus been made for this to be possible from 2016.

As you can see, while our situation is generally satisfactory, the task awaiting us is considerable. To achieve it we will need very good cooperation with the member States. That is the meaning of the shared responsibility which was the focus of the Brussels Conference in March 2015.

Among the events that took place in 2015, I would like to say a few words about the migrant crisis, which began in the summer of 2015 and took on considerable proportions throughout the autumn, without there being any sign of an improvement in the situation.

We have received in total 24 requests for Rule 39 measures from migrants refusing to be returned to Hungary. We have accepted 10 requests for the application of Rule 39. They concern applicants of various nationalities (Afghans, Palestinians, Syrians, etc.).

Moreover, on 22 September 2015 notice of two such cases was given to Austria, inviting Hungary, Serbia, the UNHCR, and the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner to intervene as third parties in the proceedings. Only the Human Rights Commissioner accepted that invitation. Both cases are pending and should be dealt with during the first half of 2016.

So as you can see, for the time being the impact of the migrant crisis on the Court has not been significant in quantitative terms. However, a plan of action has been put in place to anticipate, and thus to deal with, a possible influx of Rule 39 requests.

That was all I wished to bring to your attention this morning before I take your questions, together with our Registrar, Roderick Liddell, who is assisting me at this press conference.