Opening by (Acting) President of the Administrative Council,
H.E. Max van der Stoel, Minister of State

It is a particular pleasure for me, both as former Foreign Minister of The Netherlands and in my current capacity as Minister of State, to preside over this meeting of the Administrative Council of the PCA to commemorate the signing, exactly 100 years ago, of the 1907 Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes – one of the two constitutive treaties of this august institution.

In doing so, I share with you a sense of pride in the institution’s remarkable revival since the late 1990’s, after years of relatively little use. In 1999, it had only one case on its docket, albeit a major interstate arbitration. Today, the institution boasts twenty pending cases – an all-time high in its long history and breaking its earlier record of the past two years. The PCA has made a convincing comeback indeed, reclaiming its rightful place in the international dispute resolution system. It now, no doubt, looks towards the future with renewed confidence, standing side by side with the International Court of Justice in this magnificent building to serve, each in its own specific way, the international community.

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, made this very point most recently in January 2005 when he said: “Today, the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the International Court of Justice are not merely neighbors in the Hague Peace Palace; they are complementary institutions offering the international community a comprehensive range of options for the peaceful resolution of disputes.”

So it is, indeed. I wish to join the former UNSG, also on behalf of the Netherlands Government, in his satisfaction that, of late, a growing number of States have acceded to the 1907 Convention and, in so doing, joined this institution. Your Secretary-General informs me that the membership of the PCA has increased by more than 20% in the last seven years alone. The Government of the host State is of course very pleased with that positive development. On her behalf, I would invite those Ambassadors present here today as observers to encourage their Governments to initiate or complete – whichever the case may be – the accession procedures, so that we can welcome them in our midst as regular members of the Council.