

Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frans Timmermans, at the official ceremony to mark the 10th anniversary of the ICC, 14 November 2012

Speech | 14-11-2012

Your Majesty, Mr President, Your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I feel most impressed by seeing you here today. We are honoured by your presence. And we see your presence as a testimony to your commitment to the ICC and its future.

Aristotle said that at his best, man is the noblest of all animals; separated from law and justice, he is the worst. This shows that for millennia man has been struggling with the tension between good and evil, which is part of humanity. There will always be evil in man. But there will always be men struggling for the good. The ICC is an important instrument to try and repress the evil in man. And to try to put an end to impunity.

I strongly believe in the ICC's mission. And that the ICC can only be as strong as its States Parties allow it to be.

We can only have an ICC that does even better than it has for the last ten years, if you and your countries are willing to invest more in its activities.

And if we all redouble our efforts to convince other countries to join it and to share our vision, so we can make sure that in the future our children and grandchildren will not be confronted with the atrocities we've just seen in the slides.

It is my firm belief that there are three areas where the ICC has a pivotal role to play in international justice.

First of all, prevention. The mere fact that the ICC exists, and that sooner or later perpetrators will end up before its judges, has a huge effect on their behaviour. I believe that this aspect of the ICC may well be its most important asset.

Secondly, protection. I believe we have an obligation to protect those who have been victims of atrocities, of human rights violations, of the horrible things we've just seen. And for that reason, the Dutch government has put €500,000 into a fund to help the victims of these atrocities and make sure that their protection is assured in the future.

And thirdly, of course, prosecution. We want to see perpetrators before these judges. We want them to have their day in court. And to have what they did be judged. And then, if they're found guilty, we want them to be punished.

This is an obligation we have taken on ourselves. The Dutch government has this obligation for the simple reason that it is part of our constitution. The promotion of the international

legal order is enshrined in the Dutch constitution. That is why we are so proud that we can now call The Hague the legal capital of the world. And why we will keep investing, together with the mayor of The Hague, in retaining this position for the Netherlands and The Hague.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Martin Luther King once said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.'

I think this is perhaps the strongest statement that could be made to justify the existence and the strengthening of the International Criminal Court. And I call upon you, all of you, to help us make sure that the International Criminal Court will sooner or later be a universal instrument for humanity worldwide.

Thank you.