

**Remarks made by Ambassador Muhammad Ali Sorcar of Bangladesh
at an event commemorating Bangladesh's membership to the
International Criminal Court
The Hague, 12 November 2010**

Mr. President,

1. It is my great honor and privilege to be able to represent Bangladesh at an event which commemorates Bangladesh's becoming the 111th member to the International Criminal Court, following its ratification of the Rome Statute on 23 March 2010.

2. May I reiterate, on this occasion, how deeply Bangladesh is committed to the purpose and principles of the Rome Statute. We had been intimately involved in the negotiations of the document during the whole span from 1995 to 1998. We were in favour of adoption at the dramatic midnight call for vote in Rome on 17 July 1998 that led to the historical breakthrough in favour of the ICC statute.

3. Bangladesh had since been at the forefront of the global campaign for the early adoption of the Statute and the establishment of an International Criminal Court. Naturally, we also aspired to be among the first who ratified, even if we were a lone voice from South Asia. With this intent, the Bangladesh Prime Minister herself signed the treaty on 16 September 1999 in New York — an occasion where I had the privilege to be present personally.

4. You all are aware of the subsequent events that stood in our way for an early ratification. But we still pride ourselves in being one of the original signatories with the intent to be a founding member of the Court.

Mr. President,

5. We deeply identify ourselves to the collective conscience of mankind that led to the elaboration of the Rome Statute and the creation of the International Criminal Court. Our conviction to such a mechanism has been as old as the struggle that led to our independence almost 40 years ago, if not from long before. Our ongoing effort to bring to justice those who committed war crimes during the 1971 War of Liberation of Bangladesh is a natural expression of our intention to end the culture of impunity to crimes against humanity. We believe that such atrocities destroy harmony, tear apart the social fabric, and give rise to wounds that

do not heal easily. There should be a solid national response to such crimes. And there should be a sound international mechanism put in place to address and prevent any such future instances. This will consolidate people's confidence that crime against humanity is no longer immune, even if perpetrated by the mighty. The collective consciousness of mankind leads to definitive consequences and the rule of law transcend boundaries.

6. We are not unaware of the criticism that the international community feels more compelled to take concerted action against certain instances, while at the same time is much less responsive to others which are equally atrocious. This observation, true in many instances, should not prevent us from seeking global solidarity, and to stand up against perpetrators. We can only overcome such unrealities with sustained effort and through establishment of justice. When a sufficient number of cases have been dealt with, and a trend is established of taking action on crimes against humanity, a tradition will emerge when uneven responses of the international community to sequential breaches of law will be minimized, or even eliminated. The observation that the international community is apathetic to some instances cannot be an excuse not to pursue international criminal justice. Rather this is an even more compelling reason to vigorously seek justice through global institutional mechanisms. I recall here President Nelson Mandela, who said, "Let it never be asked of any one of us – what did we do when we knew that another was repressed." The ICC is an answer to this. It is an answer to the culture of impunity that is so pervasive in the troubled history of mankind, but against which such great mobilization has taken place from countries big and small, and from regions far and wide.

Mr. President,

7. May I reiterate the commitment of my Government to the pursuit of a tolerant, peaceful and just world where people from all color and creed live in harmony and dignity. We believe that through the action of the International Criminal Court, an unquestionable and universal standard will emerge towards a world free from crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression. You will always find Bangladesh supportive in your efforts to these goals.

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