

Assembly of States Parties
Trust Fund for Victims (TFV)
Chair, Board of Directors
Ms Elisabeth Rehn
6 December 2010

Mr President,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims today. I will take this opportunity to highlight some developments for the Trust Fund for Victims in the past year, as well as my personal observations from my missions to the field in northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As you know, the present Board has assumed its functions one year ago. At this first subsequent regular ASP meeting, I would like to acknowledge the commitment and perseverance of the previous Board of Directors of the Trust Fund, who have overseen the take-off of the Trust Fund's activities as well as its institutional development. This has not been an easy task, as the Trust Fund is a unique undertaking without precedent. The work of the previous Board has ensured that there is a sound basis for the Trust Fund for Victims to view the future with confidence.

At the start of our mandate, we addressed the selection and appointment of a new Executive Director as a matter of priority – and successfully. Mr Pieter de Baan has taken up this position as of September this year. I am happy to note that during his first months in office, Mr De Baan has taken great care to establish a personal working relationship with each of the Board members and to create a positive atmosphere of collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders both in The Hague and in the field. I would like to acknowledge our appreciation of the efforts of the Secretariat, and in particular Ms Kristin Kalla, Senior Programme Officer, who also performed the role of Acting Executive Director for a year and a half, with tireless energy.

As President Song reiterated in his recent speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations: the scope of engagement by International Criminal Court with the victims, next to the perpetrators, of crimes within its jurisdiction *is without precedent and increasingly gaining substance*. This was clearly and comprehensively confirmed during the Kampala Review Conference this summer, where the Board of the Trust Fund for Victims was represented by Betty Murungi, Eduardo Pizarro and myself. In Kampala, the role and position of victims before the Court was one of the four major stocktaking issues addressed by the conference.

Preceding the official opening, a Special Day on Victims, organised by the NGOs present in Kampala, was a very successful side event, completed by the Trust Fund for Victims' invitational, a Special Evening for Justice, which was co-organised by the Cinema for Peace Foundation.

What also helped to put the Trust Fund on the map, were the site visits to Trust Fund projects in northern Uganda. Seeing is believing. Many of you were able, for the first time, to encounter and engage with victims and their communities, to appreciate the services provided by the Trust Fund and its partners, as well as the impact on the lives and dignity of the beneficiaries.

Allow me to share some personal impressions. The first thing that struck me is how clearly the Trust Fund supported activities are meeting the needs expressed by victims, or “survivors”, as they like to be called. There is of course the obvious, generally shared desire for peace and security. And education, since as one survivor told me: “... educated people are much more difficult to control.”

The big revelation for me, was the enormous importance of trauma counselling for survivors of violence. In groups or alone, victims told me they have much more confidence and self-esteem when having someone to share their tragedies with and to accompany them in a professional manner.

The Trust Fund’s report shows how in the situations before the Court, *women and young girls* are often disproportionately victimised by sexual and gender based violence. They are subjected to abduction, forced conscription and sexual slavery, as in northern Uganda, or to the gruesome practice of rape as a tactic of war, as in eastern Congo. Adding insult to injury, female victims are oftentimes rejected by their families and their communities. As was told to me, “the pride of a man can not tolerate an unfaithful wife” - even if her so-called unfaithfulness was in fact a vicious act of rape...

This type of observation leads me to stress the importance of addressing the role and attitudes of men. As husbands, fathers and relatives, they have a responsibility to prevent male violence on women and girls. As agents of change, rather than barriers to change, men are to champion female leadership, in communities as well as at the institutional level.

The initial research findings of the Trust Fund's victim impact survey highlight the perspective of female victims on reconciliation, their rehabilitation and reparations. These are amongst the important insights that may be helpful in determining the scope and form of reparations, so that they are culturally appropriate and locally relevant.

As it matures, the Trust Fund for Victims, which is supporting now over 70,000 direct beneficiaries in DRC and Uganda, *tangibly embodies the spirit of restorative justice* enshrined in the Rome Statute system. As such it is unique, without precedent – and worthy of your support. Our link to the International Criminal Court may pose practical problems for reaching out effectively to victims, or for the security and reputation of our partners – local and international. At the end of the day, however, it is precisely because of the restorative and reparative qualities, and its link to the ICC, that Trust Fund for Victims will be able to bring some form of international recognition to the most vulnerable victims and their communities. And, more importantly, to bring substantive support to those who often fall in between the cracks of more mainstream rule-of-law, humanitarian or developmental programmes. To quote again President Song: “The Trust Fund for Victims finds itself at the cross-

roads of international justice and humanitarian concern for victims, acknowledging their plight and restoring their dignity”.

I do realise these are difficult economic times for most of you. But I also trust that you will appreciate that the Trust Fund is in need of proper resources to properly maintain this ambitions. So far, voluntary contributions by States Parties have amounted to 5.8 million euro, including more than 1.2 million euro in this year. For all voluntary contributions, including those which have been confirmed in the last few weeks, I wish to express the gratitude of the Board of Directors.

Mr President, allow me to take this opportunity not only to thank Parties who have contributed so far, but also to extend an invitation to other States Parties, *and to non – States Parties*, some of whom I know are present today, to consider contributing to the Trust Fund for Victims, financially or in kind.

Nevertheless, I urge you to consider the enormous challenge we continue to face in providing victims of the most serious crimes with some measure of international recognition by the ICC, but also with concrete assistance that will satisfy their immediate needs and will help them on the way to recovery – and to the dignity that they deserve.

I assure you that the Board of Directors and Secretariat of the Trust Fund for Victims remain deeply committed to their support to victims under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

Thank you.