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Foreign Secretary marks International Criminal Justice Day

17 July 2011

Foreign Secretary William Hague described International Criminal Justice Day as an "important moment" to remember those seeking justice for appalling crimes.

Speaking today the Foreign Secretary said:

"I welcome the establishment of International Criminal Justice Day. This is an important moment to remember those who are still seeking justice for appalling crimes, including crimes against humanity, and the many dedicated and courageous individuals who work in the field of international justice. The UK has played an important role in the development of international humanitarian law and the International Criminal Court, and is the only country currently engaged in all six existing criminal tribunals.



"The UK will continue to be a staunch advocate of justice for the victims of international atrocities and to the ending of impunity for those who perpetrate such crimes."

17 July marks the date when the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was first adopted in 1998. The UK played a leading role in negotiating the Rome Statute, and remains a strong support of the international justice system.

The United Kingdom holds a unique position within the international justice system, as the only country that is actively engaged with all six existing criminal tribunals – through its Security Council membership the UK supports the work of the tribunals on the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda; the UK supports the voluntary tribunals for Sierra Leone, Cambodia and Lebanon both financially and through involvement in the management committees of those tribunals; and the UK has been an ICC State Party since the ICC was established in 2002.

All these tribunals play an active role in delivering justice to the victims of the most serious crimes of international concern. The ICC in particular places a special focus on the rights and needs of the victim during its proceedings. In March 2011, the British government donated £500,000 to the Court's Trust Fund for Victims, which is working to rehabilitate the victims of serious unrest in northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic.

Since the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted on 17 July 1998, 116 countries have ratified and become Parties to the treaty. By doing so, these countries have demonstrated a commitment to the principles of international justice and the rule of law. However, the ICC will not be able to fully exercise its mandate until there has been wider acceptance of and accession to the Rome Statute. The United Kingdom made a pledge at the ICC's Review Conference in Kampala last year to support initiatives that would lead to increased ratification of the statute, and wider adoption by states at the national level of relevant supporting legislation. This week Law Ministers from Commonwealth States adopted a new Model Law, which will assist Commonwealth countries seeking to implement domestic legislation in support of their Rome Statute obligations.

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