



Kampala, Uganda, 31 May 2010 - Secretary-General's press conference

Ambassador Wenaweser, Judge Song, Representatives of the national and international media, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank Ambassador Wenaweser and President Song for their tireless efforts in preparing this landmark event, and for their commitment to international criminal justice. It has been a pleasure and an honour to work with them.

As I said in my speech to the conference, the old era of impunity is over. In its place, slowly but surely, we are witnessing the birth of a new age of accountability.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court struck a resounding blow for peace, justice and human rights.

At this conference, we hope to take stock of the Court's progress and strengthen it for the future.

We want to send a message: that atrocities and heinous crimes cannot go unpunished.

And we want to bolster the Court's deterrent effect – and make potential perpetrators think twice before they act.

I urge all States to cooperate with the Court, and I encourage those States that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute. For the ICC to have the reach it should possess, it must have universal support. Otherwise, we simply embolden those who would commit terrible crimes and those who might want to see the Court fail.

The United Nations played an essential role in bringing the ICC into existence. We have stood with the Court ever since, advocating for it and cooperating with it. It has become the centrepiece of our system of international criminal justice. Kampala is an opportunity to advance the cause further still.

In view of the seriousness of the situation which happened this morning, I would like with the understanding of the President of the ICC and the President of this Conference, if I make a statement on that situation.

I am shocked by reports of killings and injuries of people on the boats carrying supplies for Gaza, apparently in international waters, in the early hours of this morning. I condemn this violence. We do not yet know the full facts yet. More than ten people appeared to have been killed and many more wounded. It is vital that there is a full investigation to determine exactly how this bloodshed took place. I believe Israel must urgently provide a full explanation. I have instructed my Special Coordinator, Robert Serry, and UNRWA Commissioner General Filippo Grandi, to actively engage on the ground in urging restraint and ensuring that no further harm is done and coordinating with all relevant parties.

Q: [on criticisms of the ICC as a toothless dog and a possible enactment of a law on the crimes of aggression in the face of the Israeli raid on the aid flotilla]

SG: First of all, I am sure that there will be time enough for the international community to assess the proper response, including through the United Nations. Right now, what is absolutely vital, is that we first have a full account of the incident - what has happened -and Israel must provide a full explanation of this. For any further course of action, I will have to discuss with member states of the United Nations, including the Security Council or other concerned parties. I understand that the League of Arab States may be meeting in an urgent session. So we will act and coordinate with concerned parties.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, how do you personally define the crime of aggression?

SG: I understand that there [could be] a consensus agreement among the States Parties to this ICC for the definition of this crime of aggression, and I support that. In this case, my personal definition may not be important.

Q: [inaudible] on how to hold the five veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council accountable in the context of the ICC.

SG: As a matter of principle, everybody agrees that there should be no impunity and wherever these crimes are perpetuated, the perpetrators must know that they will never be left unpunished – that is what we have agreed and I am sure that this principle will be reaffirmed by this conference. And, in that regard, this morning again, I have called upon those countries that have not yet done so, to ratify this Rome Statute as soon as possible. If it is possible, again, for the

ICC to have a reach around the world, there must be a universality. I again urge those countries who have not ratified this Rome Statute they should do so.

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