

SONIA UCIEDA: I am a journalist over in the international tribunal and the Vice President of the Association at the ICC. I'm talking as a journalist here.

I should say, Mr. Prosecutor, last Monday in your speech, the media played a key role in the prevention of conflicts on large-scale atrocities, but I'm sure that you are also aware of our importance in providing information about the result of legal proceedings to the victims and their families on the one hand and to the government, NGOs, and the public, information in general, on the other. We journalists are also the main channel to convey the image of impartiality, credibility, and effectiveness to which this Court and the Office of the Prosecutor aspire. And we are the key to put aside many of those misunderstandings and doubts to which you, Mr. Prosecutor, referred to in your speech. Therefore, I take the opportunity to state that without us, the journalists, the work of this Court would lose much of its meaning. So it is my great surprise that only eight lines in the draft policy paper, in Section 3, are dedicated to what is called the Public Information Unit.

We consider it extremely appropriate that the text establish that the Office of the Prosecutor must have its separate mass media and public relations capacity and the existence of at least one spokesperson and the public communication advisor. Nevertheless, these eight lines include one point that is of concern to us. The text says:

"The activities of the Office of the Prosecutor ... must be reflected in mass media without involving the Chief Prosecutor himself in personal interviews or contacts with the press."

I'm really sorry to say that the Prosecutor must necessarily offer personal interviews amounting to contact with the press. The

spokesperson or Public Communications Advisor can and must give information, clarify any doubts, and provide background information or material. The spokesperson might provide what we call a quote that will take up to two lines in a newspaper or 30 seconds on television or radio, but the only one who really manages to get a full page with a photo in a newspaper or a ten-minute block in radio or television is the Prosecutor himself. Furthermore, we are sure that in this case, with your experience in the media, you will not have any difficulty with us.

We believe, of course, that the Prosecutor's interviews or personal appearance must be reserved for the most important and relevant moments, but then your statements will have to transmit trust and convey the impression of transparency and openness to which your Office aspires.

What should a journalist expect from those in charge of the media relations? First of all, availability, not only to pick up the phone but also to show up in person at the right moment. Second - and although this may seem obvious it is extremely important - we must have answers to the questions we put forth. Finding a balance between the right of victims, witnesses, and those who are before trial and the right for information is of utmost importance. Those of us who cover the international courts here in The Hague have very recently had experience with spokespersons that do not have or cannot give any answers and have to consult with others to inform themselves or inform themselves in order to solve the simplest doubts, and, Mr. Prosecutor, for a journalist, half an hour difference might mean that the report arrives too late.

We also expect from those in charge of the relations with the media to have the necessary experience and skills to be able to deal with journalists with less knowledge of the technical aspects or a specific policy of individual cases, and also to accept and to answer critical questions without misconstruing them as a personal attack. We are not

enemies, but we are not official spokespeople either, and our points of view do not necessarily agree with those of the Office of the Prosecutor.

It would be also interesting if the Office of the Prosecutor organised weekly, for example, a press conference to inform us of last-minute developments, providing us with an opportunity to clarify doubts and ask questions.

Finally, I would like to mention, as Thomas said, that we, the journalists who regularly cover the international court, have already a very good relationship with the Public Relations Office of the Court. Our opinions are valued. We are listened to. In fact, the idea of creating an association of journalists for the ICC came from there. We hope and wish that this good relationship can extend to the Prosecutor and his Office.

Thank you very much.