



8 March 2012

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a very good International Women's Day.

Throughout my career as a lawyer and a Prosecutor, I have always placed a big emphasis on encouraging women, and especially African women, to take their chances and believe in themselves and in their true potential. Empowerment is the key. As women, as sisters, as mothers, I strongly believe there is nothing we cannot achieve. Those of you reading this message today are a testament to this. And many more will come.

I also remember that during the process that preceded my election as the new Prosecutor of this Court, I was also blessed to receive the support of women's groups working to empower our sisters all over the world, and most particularly in Africa and in our situation countries. I deeply value their friendship and their commitment, and we will continue to work closely together to achieve this crucial goal during my tenure as Prosecutor.

With the International Women's Day we celebrate the achievements of the last centuries; we remember those that have fought so hard for women's rights, that stood tall and wrote History.

Women's day should serve as a reminder that there is still much to be done. My thoughts and prayers go to our sisters in Uganda, in Ituri, in the Central African Republic, who were subjected to unimaginable violence; and to those in Darfur, in the Kivus, and indeed everywhere in the world, who continue to suffer from massive rapes, other types of gender based crimes and their consequences.

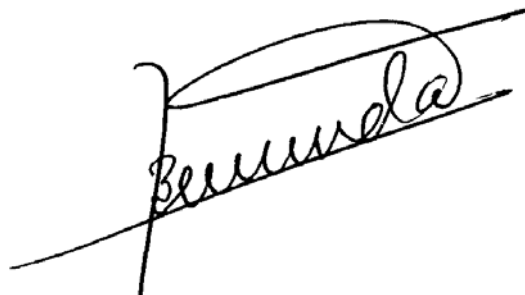
Gender and sexual crimes have gone un-reported and un-punished for far too long, with so much shame and misconceptions involved. It is my belief that the law and judicial proceedings are a powerful tool to shed light on these crimes, give a voice to the victims and punish their perpetrators. The law will help change behaviour.

The body of the ICC's first cases is a clear signal to the world that impunity for gender crimes must stop.

It is my commitment as new Prosecutor of the ICC to make sure that victims of these crimes see their perpetrators being arrested and prevented from committing additional crimes.

It is my hope that, in the near future, when we come together again to celebrate this day, it will be a day of celebration, not one marked by the suffering of victims and our failure to prevent them.

I hope you will join me in this fight.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fatou Bensouda', written over a horizontal line.

Fatou Bensouda
Deputy Prosecutor