

**Launching of celebrations of the  
17 July: International Criminal Justice Day**  
*Friday 06 July 2012, The Hague*

**Remarks of Judge Sang-Hyun Song,  
President of the International Criminal Court**

Your Excellency, Ambassador Hoscheit,

Excellencies, distinguished representatives of States Parties to the Rome Statute,

Distinguished representatives of civil society,

Dear colleague Judges, Madam Registrar and staff members of the ICC

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address this distinguished audience as we launch commemorations of the International Criminal Justice Day of July the 17th. But let me first return briefly to the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute and the birth of the ICC.

On the 1st of July, 2002, the first three staff members of the ICC arrived on these premises. On that day, the Rome Statute, the ICC's governing treaty, entered into force. Two of those three original staff members – Phakiso Mochochoko and Claudia Perdomo – are still with us, but today they are surrounded by a few more colleagues than they were ten years ago!

Indeed, the ICC staff are an invaluable asset. Without them the Court would be an empty shell. As you all know, we have recently gone through a crisis with four of our colleagues detained in Libya, and I would like express my gratitude for their safe return earlier this week. We are delighted to have them back with us and reunited with their families.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the many staff members, diplomats and others who worked tirelessly during the last three weeks to secure the release of our colleagues. I would also like to thank all states, organisations and individuals who voiced their support for our efforts and actions aimed at the resolution of this particular crisis.

The detention of our staff in Libya has been an exceptionally challenging episode, and we can take pride in the unity of the ICC community during this difficult time. It is my belief that the widespread international support and assistance received by the Court at this trying time demonstrates the strength of the ICC at its milestone tenth anniversary.

Now we need to analyse what happened and ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future, so that the ICC can conduct its judicial mandate unhindered. I trust we can count on the support of all of you in that process.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

During the historic 1998 Rome Conference, the majority of the world's states embarked upon an ambitious path to institutionalize the increased global desire for justice. 14 years later, the Rome Statute system has managed to establish itself as the leading international paradigm for global justice, deterring future atrocities and delivering justice where national jurisdictions fail to do so.

The ICC has transformed from a Court on paper into a major international judicial institution that is actively involved in 7 country situations and monitoring developments in many more, on several continents. The ICC recently issued its first judgment, and since we last gathered together to celebrate the International Justice Day, the Court has gained five new states parties. In total, 121 States have ratified the Rome Statute thus far, and an additional 32 States have signed the treaty, signifying their intention to join.

Looking back at the past decade, it is clear that support for international justice continues to increase around the world. Everywhere, people want justice, peace, rule of law and respect for human dignity. The ICC represents the voluntary gathering of nations in a community of values and aspirations for a more secure future for children, women and men around the world.

While we celebrate the achievements of the ICC community to date, we should not forget the unimaginable atrocities that continue around the world. In solidarity, we must recognize the obstacles that remain on the path toward ending impunity, and redouble our commitment to further strengthen the Rome Statute system.

We must not let down the countless victims around the world who place their hope in this institution. With joint efforts and determination, we may move closer to fulfilling our ultimate goal, preventing terrible suffering before it takes place.

As we reflect upon the significance of the ICC's 10th anniversary, and International Criminal Justice day, I would like to pay tribute to all those who have worked very hard to make the ICC a living reality. The ICC did not create itself; the outstanding contributions of civil society, states, staff of the Court, and many other organisations and individuals have brought us to where we are today.

The ICC belongs to all of humanity – let us all take good care of this institution as we embark on our second decade together.

Thank you.