



**Speech by Silvana Arbia,
Registrar of the International Criminal Court**

Ceremony for the Solemn Undertaking of the Registrar

The Hague, 17 April 2008

Mr. President, Vice-Presidents,
Your honors,
Mr. Prosecutor,
Ms. Ambassador, Vice – President of the Assembly of States Parties,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues and friends,

Thank you all for your presence at this event; you are witnesses of my engagement and of my complete dedication to the International Criminal Justice.

I would like to publicly express my gratitude to the Honorable President, Vice presidents and Judges for having placed confidence in me by electing me as the Registrar of the ICC, to serve for the next five years.

I will avoid using difficult words in my addresses because it is my sincere wish to reach all those who justice is for, and sadly but true in general most of these persons are the ones with very little chance to receive education.

To them, I would like to send my simple message saying that: should they be suspects, victims or members of the society, that justice is their right and if this right is not ensured by their national jurisdiction because not existent or not working independently and fairly, the ICC is there to ensure justice for them.

My deep appreciation is also for the efforts of all actors involved in the judicial proceedings; first of all the Prosecutor whose challenges are well known to me due to my previous experience as Chief of Prosecutions at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. I am confident that my experience will facilitate the consultation and the collaboration in matters of common interest.

I would also like to pronounce my sincere acknowledgement of the role of the Defense. The quality of the defense is a key aspect in rendering Justice.

My special consideration is also extended to the ICC Registry, which under the leadership of my predecessor, Mr. Cathala, has obtained excellent results permitting us to build on the achievements and further advance in a phase where the ICC, and thus also the Registry, will face new problems and new challenges. The issues at stake for the administration and the support to the Court will be numerous for the Registry during the second decade of the existence of the Rome Statue.

In brief, in my capacity as the Registrar, my focus will be on the judicial proceedings which are the final and most visible result of the joint effort of all the organs of the Court. In particular, the Registry will dedicate its energy to the first trial commencing this year.

One major challenge will continue to be the protection of witnesses. The systems we put in place have to be efficient and sustainable.

The first trial shall strive to be a model for national jurisdictions and also a positive benchmark for regions and states which have not yet accepted the jurisdiction of the ICC.

Obviously, what has been done and what will be done in the future at this Court can only be done thanks to the commendable efforts of the States. It is their support that has permitted that an international criminal court exists and continues to develop.

As the Registrar, I welcome all efforts undertaken by the states in accelerating the process of adaptation of their national legislation and of preparation of their national Judiciary. Implementing legislation is the basis for an effective cooperation and for complementarity.

I would like to pay special tribute to the Host State for its effective and valuable cooperation, which is and will be essential for the institution and for all its staff members.

The ICC could not be imagined without the valuable assistance of civil society groups. I hope that they will continue providing their contribution.

I would like to thank all individuals who trust this Court, supporting it in whatever form possible. The international criminal justice as a factor of a new world wide civilization will certainly assist the international community to make effective progress in reducing conflicts and discrimination.

Now please allow me to share with you what shall be forever etched in my memory: the images of the victims of the most terrible crimes - genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes - which devastated Rwanda. And the images of the survivors who, although they were not yet born at the time of the events of 1994, gaze at us with eyes heavy with reproach because we did nothing to prevent this irreparable human tragedy, which, alas, will not be the last of its kind.

The International Criminal Court has been created precisely for this reason, to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of such horrible crimes and thus to contribute to their prevention.

And that is why the International Criminal Court must accomplish its mission to the full and why it must be supported by us all.

Thank you.