



PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Ceremony for the Solemn Undertaking

Courtroom I, International Criminal Court

17 January 2008

Statement by H.E. Mr. Bruno Stagno

President of the Assembly of States Parties

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet today to witness the solemn undertaking of the oath of office of three newly-elected judges of the International Criminal Court, at a time when the world continues to be scarred by the ravages of the most serious crimes known to man, crimes which show man's inhumanity to man, crimes which continue to shock the conscience of mankind.

In the midst of this darkness that continues to mar our world, the International Criminal Court stands as a permanent beacon of light, and of hope for the numerous victims of the crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court---genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Court also stands as a reminder to perpetrators of these heinous crimes that the international community will not tolerate impunity for such crimes.

Since the entry into force of the Rome Statute on 2 July 2002, and the establishment of the Court, we can be justly proud of its accomplishments. It is important to once more recall that the Court stands alongside the Governments of the world in the international struggle for justice and peace, and is a Court of last resort. The Statute requires that States investigate and prosecute the crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court; the Court will act only in the specific circumstances spelt out in the Statute. I wish to highlight here the importance of the international community providing the necessary cooperation to the Court to enable it to carry out its mandate under the Rome Statute. Such cooperation is particularly crucial at this point in time in the execution of the outstanding warrants of arrest issued by the Court.

In the few years that the Court has been in existence, its judicial work has been progressing apace. It can be truly said that the Court is already developing its own jurisprudence. I wish to note also the recent decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber regarding the participation of victims in the proceedings before the Court, not as witnesses, but in their own right.

The three new judges take the oath of office today at a crucial point in time- the Court has now entered the trial phase, now that charges have been confirmed in one case. The new judges would have the distinct opportunity to contribute to the development of the criminal jurisprudence of the Court.

A judge of the International Criminal Court bears a heavy burden. The victims of the crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court look to the judges to administer justice in situations that have deeply affected and impacted on their lives and their communities. The accused would also expect that their trials would be conducted in a fair, effective and impartial manner. If the Court stands as a permanent beacon of light and of hope, the judges are the bearers of that light and hope to the persons

suffering at the hands of the perpetrators of these heinous crimes within its jurisdiction.

The international community has entrusted you, the judges of the Court, with this grave responsibility. Mindful of the important role of the judges of the Court, the Assembly of States Parties, in the selection process, exercised the utmost care and attention, so as to ensure the continued high calibre of the judges who would complete the terms of office of the three judges who resigned. The credibility and legitimacy of the Court will, to a great extent, be reflected in the calibre of the judges and of their judgements. It was an honour for me to have presided over this meeting of the Assembly of States Parties, and I congratulate all who participated and assisted in the process.

Here I would wish to pay tribute to the three judges who resigned in 2007: Judge Maureen Harding Clark (Ireland), Judge Karl Hudson-Phillips (Trinidad and Tobago) and Judge Claude Jorda (France). I wish to acknowledge their contributions as members of the first bench of the International Criminal Court, and their role in establishing the judiciary. Theirs was not an easy task, but they discharged it in a distinguished and honourable manner.

At the second plenary meeting of its sixth session, held on 30 November and 3 December 2007, the Assembly proceeded to elect three judges of the International Criminal Court in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute, as well as resolution ICC-ASP/5/Res.5. .

The following persons were elected judges of the International Criminal Court:

Mr. Daniel David Ntanda Nsereko

Ms. Fumiko Saiga

Mr. Bruno Cotte

As you accept your new responsibilities, I would urge you to be ever mindful that the eyes of the international community are looking to you to bring justice where heinous crimes have been committed. Justice and peace are mutually reinforcing ideals, and the International Criminal Court must do its part, together with the international community and relevant international institutions, towards ensuring a peaceful and just world.

I wish to conclude by thanking the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the host State to the International Criminal Court and to several other international judicial institutions, for the hospitality and support it offers to the International Criminal Court.

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Pursuant to article 45 of the Rome Statute, before taking up their duties under the Statute, the judges shall each make a solemn undertaking in open court to exercise their functions impartially and conscientiously.