

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT,
PHILIPPE KIRSCH**

Information session for diplomatic representations

Brussels, 8 June 2005

It is my pleasure to welcome you here today to the fourth diplomatic briefing of the International Criminal Court, the second to be held in Brussels. Maintaining regular dialogue with States is a priority for the Court. The Court is committed to regular diplomatic briefings – including an annual briefing here in Brussels to reach out in particular to those who cannot attend briefings at the seat of the Court. I also encourage you to communicate with us through any other appropriate means.

We propose to focus our discussion today on the Court's field operations in order to provide you with a first-hand account of what the Court is doing. In a moment, the Deputy Prosecutor for Investigations and the Registrar will provide you with an overview of the Court's activities in the field. The Director of the Secretariat of the Assembly of States Parties will then provide you with some information regarding the ASP. I will first briefly begin by providing an update of a number of key developments that have prepared the Court to meet the challenge of extending its operations into the field.

This briefing is supported by the information package you received last week, which provides a summary of main activities of each organ of the Court and the Secretariat of States Parties. Our presentations today will be brief. Our aim is to provide an opportunity for the Court to engage in a dialogue with States. We would hope, therefore, to have as much time as possible to provide answers to your questions. So please feel free to ask as many questions as you wish.

The Court is now at a crucial phase of its operations. I would note, first of all, that the Court is one ratification short of 100. Following the inauguration of the Court's 18 Judges in March of 2003, next week marks two years since the

Prosecutor was sworn in, in a solemn ceremony in the presence of the judges at the Peace Palace. Since that time, the Court has entered the judicial phase of its operations. Four situations have been referred to the Prosecutor. Three States Parties have referred situations on their territory. As you are undoubtedly aware, on 31 March 2005, the Security Council referred the situation in Darfur, Sudan.

Over the past two years, much work went into preparing the Court for its regular activities. As you know, the Court has worked from the very beginning to prepare itself for this moment. The Presidency has assigned each situation to a Pre-Trial Chamber. The Office of the Prosecutor is carrying out investigations in two situations, Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo. The Office has carried out many investigative missions, concluded agreements necessary for its work, and participated in pre-trial hearings. Pre-Trial Chamber I, with responsibility for the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, has held the first hearings and issued several decisions. Our Public Information Office promptly disseminates information about these proceedings and the status of all situations.

In general, the judges have been engaged in preparations for the technical aspects of their work. They meet in Chambers, Divisions, plenary and other regular meetings to coordinate and discuss matters of joint interest such as practical elements of victims' participation in proceedings, disclosure of documents, presentation of evidence, translation and interpretation, and issues relating to the defence and the accused. The judges held a plenary session in March in which they adopted the Code of Judicial Ethics, which you can find on the ICC website. The Court's Registry has undertaken a range of activities to

support the Court in its field operations. The Kampala field office in Uganda is fully operational as will soon be the field office in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Networks have been established with local counterparts to support the Court in carrying out its mandate and efforts are underway to provide information to affected communities on the work of the Court.

I would now like to move on to issues relating to management of the Court. The senior management of the Court continues to implement the recommendations and follow-up on issues raised by States Parties. We are working to take into account and to follow up on the issues that you have raised during the last ASP. For example, the Court has instituted a new process of budget preparation for the 2006 draft programme budget. At its recent meeting in April, the Committee on Budget and Finance observed that, "if well implemented, the new approach would be beneficial to the Court, the Committee and the Assembly." More details on this new budget process can be found in the information package provided to you. We will also be happy to entertain any questions you may have on the process.

The Committee on Budget and Finance also welcomed the Court's work to date on developing a strategic plan. This plan is being elaborated in part because Assembly of States Parties has demonstrated a clear interest in such a plan. This plan will set out the strategic goals for the Court and the Court's proposed development over the next five years. We are in the process of adding content to the plan's framework. We are also taking the first steps towards linking the strategic plan with the budget preparation process. The plan will continue to develop over time as the Court evolves.

Our success on the budget, strategic plan, and other management activities has been facilitated by the commitment of all organs to the “one Court” principle. The Coordination Council, comprised of the Prosecutor, Registrar, and myself, continues to lead the Court in implementing this principle. While giving due respect to the independence of the organs under the Statute, we have made a priority of increasing cooperation and coordination among the organs on administrative issues, as well as developing, where appropriate, a common strategy for public information, outreach and external relations.

We endeavour to remain responsive to the States Parties’ interest in efficient administration within the limits of the statutory independence of the organs. The Court will continue to work on and keep States informed of our activities on these and other Court-wide management and budget issues.

These over-arching management issues represent only a small part of the current activities of the Court. From conducting investigations, establishing field offices, providing information to affected communities and victims, to participating in hearings in our newly-constructed courtrooms, the staff of the ICC are diligently carrying out their mandate in diverse areas. I will leave it to the representative of the Prosecutor and to the Registrar to give you some indications about the important and often challenging work that is going on in the field. This overview is intended to provide you with a glimpse of the work and activities the Court as a whole is undertaking at the moment.

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