

**Cour
Pénale
Internationale**



**International
Criminal
Court**

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

*10th Anniversary of the Court
Ridderzaal (Hall of Knights)*

*The Hague
14 November 2012*

Your Majesty, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to offer closing remarks on this very special occasion. In this historical setting, we have gathered to mark a milestone in the global community's efforts to protect the most fundamental values of humanity.

Allow me to start by expressing the ICC's deep sense of gratitude to all those who have made this day possible.

First, the States Parties to the Rome Statute. The ICC was born out of your volition, and you keep the Court running. Even in the most difficult moments, the States Parties always remained determined to make the ICC a success. On behalf of the ICC, I thank you for the longstanding trust you have placed in the Court, for the support that you provide and for your commitment to overcome our shared challenges that President Intelmann aptly summarized in her remarks.

I would like to thank The Netherlands for providing a home to the ICC, and for making us feel at home. The Court attaches great importance to its special relationship with the Host State, and Minister Timmermans' remarks today have once again confirmed that the sentiment is mutual.

Next, I would like to express the Court's enormous appreciation to the civil society. Your tireless efforts are indispensable to the success of the ICC and the wider Rome Statute system. You are the Court's true constituency, representing the world's population at large.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the hard work of the judges, other elected officials and the staff of the ICC – current as well as former. I am immensely proud to be the President of an organization that brings together so many dedicated and resourceful professionals from all parts of the world. Like the States Parties, we are rich in our diversity and unified in our humanity.

When the first judges of the ICC met in 2003, we initially struggled to overcome the differences of our legal traditions. But the judges quickly realised that underneath the various legal systems lie the same human aspirations for fairness and justice.

With this sense of togetherness, we overcame countless obstacles in the last ten years. We faced many challenges when applying the provisions of the Rome Statute for the first time in practice. But we persevered, and succeeded in paving the way for a smoother second decade for the ICC's proceedings.

Your Majesty, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To have served a groundbreaking international institution during its initial decade is a great privilege. What makes this experience particularly gratifying is the cause that we serve. John Kon Kelei's moving words reminded us of the plight of the victims, which should always be on our minds and in our hearts.

While we apply the law with neutrality and objectivity, we must not forget our humanity. We must remember all those who have died at the hands of senseless violence, as well as those who worked hard before our time to make the ICC a reality. We must serve those who have been wronged and seek justice. And we must do all we can to spare future generations from terrible suffering.

During its first ten years, the International Criminal Court has made enormous strides in the fight against impunity. It has spearheaded a fundamental paradigm change in international criminal law. For the first time in history, individual criminal responsibility is enforced through a permanent international mechanism, joined by 121 nations from all continents.

The ICC's growing workload is testimony to its importance – with 14 cases in 7 country situations, involving a total of 23 suspects or accused, the Court is busy conducting the mandate it was assigned.

Justice is not only about punishing the perpetrators; it is also about providing redress to those who have been harmed by their acts. The Rome Statute's focus on victims gives the ICC unprecedented potential to bridge the gap between retributive and restorative justice.

In the first ten years, the ICC has received more than 12,000 applications from victims for participation in the judicial proceedings. Hundreds of witnesses are under the Court's protection programme.

The Trust Fund for Victims works with more than 80,000 victims in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and is soon launching operations in the Central African Republic. With its local and international partners, the Trust Fund is providing vocational training, counselling, reconciliation workshops, reconstructive surgery and more. The significance of these projects cannot be overstated.

It is clear that the ICC's activities are having an enormous impact, not just on individuals prosecuted before the Court, but on the *tens of thousands* of direct victims, *millions* of people in the affected communities and societies, and indeed several *billion* people under the legal protection of the Rome Statute system.

As we embark on the ICC's second decade, let us celebrate our achievements and be prepared for the many challenges ahead of us. We all have different roles, mandates and backgrounds, but we have the same goal. Impunity for atrocity crimes must end. Accountability must prevail. Always and everywhere. To succeed, we must remain determined and united.

Delegates of the States Parties, members of the civil society –

Be proud of and continue to support and strengthen the first permanent international criminal court you have helped establish!

Representatives of the States NOT YET Party to the Rome Statute –

Join the ICC and take active part in the universal struggle to end impunity for the gravest crimes known to humankind!

Colleagues from the ICC and other international judicial bodies -

Let us continue to work hard to sustain the trust that the international community has placed in us!

Last, but certainly not least, victims and all those representing the affected communities –

Work with us; together we can ensure that justice is done and that large-scale violence is no longer tolerated.

Dear friends of the ICC,

Let us reflect on the historic importance of the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

In the ICC, I see the ultimate realisation of our enduring aspirations for addressing injustice. I see a mechanism for ending impunity and deterring crimes. Through the ICC, *I see* the future.

Thank you.