

SARA SCHIFTER: Let me join the many people who have congratulated you on your appointment, on your wisdom to have asked Silvia Fernandez to accompany you - welcome - and also on providing the opportunity you've given us today. I'm currently with the United Nations University for Peace, headquarters in Costa Rica.

Since war crimes against women were so recently recognised by the ad hoc tribunals and are also, of course, recognised by the ICC, it is important to focus, I think, on the reality that often national states envisage such crimes and often, quite often unfortunately, violate women's human rights. The ICC could continue providing a leadership role and prosecute crimes against women including those which have been recognised as such and not yet prosecuted. Hence it becomes important to look at who the victims are as well as the gender differential treatment and impact. The question is not if the national states are willing to prosecute or able to prosecute but what are they willing to prosecute.

Two, for numerous women, which is again implicit in what I said, national courts can be dangerous, irrelevant, traumatic, or all of the above. Hence we must also attend to the unwillingness and inability of national states to prosecute specific crimes and also keep asking the question: Against whom are those crimes committed?

Thirdly, if the ICC's success - and this is just again a personal observation - will be judged by the near absence of trials, I wonder what the message will be to the victims. And also, I really ask all of us to reflect on what the purpose of the Court is all about and why we celebrate, all of us, the final creation of an international criminal court.

Thank you.