

## Madame Simone Veil\*

Ten years after its adoption, the Rome Statute remains a source of hope to hundreds of thousands of victims, and a threat to their oppressors.

There are those who might decry the slow pace of judicial proceedings and wonder at the difficulties of interpretation posed by the Rome Statute and the Rules of Procedure and Evidence. We would do well to remind ourselves in this regard of the true scope of the Rome Statute: not only did it create a permanent international criminal court, with universal reach; not only did it establish a global system of international criminal justice, integrating national judicial systems, but also, and above all, it has given victims the place in the judicial process to which they are entitled – and, thanks to the work of the Trust Fund for Victims, a place independent of that process. The operation of so ambitious a system will require time, adjustments, and, inevitably, moments of indecision.

Much has already been achieved, but the hardest task still remains: while respecting every individual's right to a fair trial, the Court has to be relentless in pursuing and trying perpetrators. But we must also respond to the needs of victims of the gravest crimes; otherwise, justice would remain incomplete.

I should like to recall the poignant testimony of one of those many – too many! – victims, Ms Esther Mujawayo. I remember the very moving meeting we had, and the words with which, in particular, she denounced the indifference of international justice to the victims. She spoke of the profound injustice still being suffered by women rape survivors – infected with AIDS but with no access to treatment, while their attackers received medical treatment in their cells at the United Nations Detention Centre: « They are cared for by the international community. And their victims, who come to give evidence at their trials, have no rights at all. Just the right to die. What kind of justice is that? ».

The founding countries of the Rome Statute have learnt from past mistakes, and the support received from you by the Trust Fund for Victims is tangible proof of that.

I should like to recall the fundamental, innovative role played by the Trust Fund. It is an integral part of the Rome Statute, its fate is intrinsically linked with that of the Court, and yet its mission is a very particular one: it seeks not only to facilitate the payment to victims of reparations ordered by the Court, but also to implement projects for the benefit of victims of crimes recognized as falling within the Court's jurisdiction, without such victims having necessarily to be parties to proceedings before the Court.

That is a quite remarkable step forward in terms of consideration of the needs of victims, which cannot be met alone by the Court's judgments against those responsible for the most serious crimes.

It is clear that the Fund will not be able to compensate in full the hundreds of thousands of victims of such crimes and to make personal reparation for all that they have suffered. But through specific actions in favour of the most vulnerable victim groups, in providing them with material assistance, the means of physical readaptation and, where necessary, psychological support, or helping them to reintegrate into their original communities, the Fund proves to victims that the sole aim of the Rome Statute is not simply to prosecute and convict criminals, but also to provide practical assistance to victims that will enable them to rebuild their lives.

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\* *Statement read by Mr. André Laperrrière, on behalf of Madame Simone Veil, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims.*

To date, eighteen projects in Uganda and sixteen relating to the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been approved by the judges of the Court. These projects are designed to benefit hundreds of thousand of victims, who might otherwise have simply been forgotten, as we have too often seen in the past. Even as I speak to you here today, there is, thanks to the actions of the Fund on the ground, a growing number of victims - mutilated, humiliated, diminished – who now present a normal appearance, and have regained the ability to function physically and psychologically, enabling them to reintegrate into society and to recover the dignity of which the perpetrators of the heinous crimes inflicted upon them had sought to deprive them.

That is a remarkable start, and we shall do all we can to ensure that the Trust Fund for Victims can continue, to ever greater and better effect, to develop its sensitive mission for as long as there are peoples falling victims to these kinds of violent act.

It would, I believe, be helpful to draw your attention to the fact that the Fund is subject to a number of requirements : legal requirements: the actions taken by it must not interfere with the Court’s judicial work; requirements of fairness: it must not favour one group of victims over another; administrative requirements: it is responsible before you for the sound management of the funds entrusted to it by you for the benefit of victims. As you know, the Fund relies essentially for its resources on voluntary contributions by States; without them, nothing could be achieved.

In this regard, may I take this opportunity to urge you to pursue your commitment to the Fund – a commitment on which we congratulate all those of you who have supported us so far, while thanking in advance all who intend to do so in the future.

I should also like to thank the staff of the Secretariat for their dedicated work, and the Registry for its administrative support. Nor could I forget the important part played by NGOs through their technical support and their advocacy of the cause of victims.

Finally, may I take advantage of this very special day to congratulate His Excellency Arthur Robinson, whom we are honoured to count among the members of the Trust Fund’s Board of Directors, for his unbounded commitment to human rights, justice and the cause of victims. He has undoubtedly most abundantly deserved the tribute which we pay to him here today.

It is now up the Trust Fund for Victims, which I have the honour to chair, to make the very most of the mission with which it is has been entrusted.

With the benefit of your support, we aim to do everything in our power to continue to help the most vulnerable victims, coordinating our actions with the decisions taken by the Court, in accordance with the provisions of the Rome Statute, and with the aspirations of its authors: justice in full; justice for all.