



Simone Veil

Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims

Fifth Session of the Assembly of States Parties

Statement

The Hague, 23 November 2006

English Version

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,

I have the honour to take the floor before your Assembly for the third time in my capacity as Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims.

I speak here also on behalf of my three other colleagues, His Excellency Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, His Grace Monsignor Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and His Excellency Mr. Arthur Robinson, to all of whom I wish to express my appreciation for the confidence that they have shown in me by asking me to come and report to you on the work of the Board of Directors since your last Assembly in December 2005.

The Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims held its third annual meeting at the seat of the Court in The Hague from 6 to 7 November 2006 with all its members present.

During the two days of the meeting, the members of the Board expressed their deep concern at the suffering of victims, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, the Central African Republic and Darfur. We focussed our efforts on designing the policies that should be adopted if we are to fulfil the legitimate expectations of the communities of victims in the situations that have been brought before the Court. The Board wishes to send a clear message to these victims and intends to pursue a policy of active assistance in 2007.

In order to successfully discharge the mandate which you, States Parties to the Rome Statute, have entrusted to us, the Board of Directors has decided to adopt a purposeful approach to identifying potential beneficiaries. The Fund wishes to place emphasis on projects aimed at the most marginalised and vulnerable victims. Similarly, the Board attaches great importance to the symbolic value of the Fund's interventions and will seek to increase the impact of its assistance projects designed to provide physical or psychological rehabilitation or material support for victims within the jurisdiction of the Court, and of their families.

In this connection, the Board has decided, firstly, to review as soon as possible, the first two requests for assistance that were submitted to it in October 2006 against the criteria of credibility, necessity and effectiveness of the projects and, secondly, to request the Secretariat of the Fund to submit for its consideration by 1 May 2007 proposals for activities and projects that could be financed by the Fund from the year 2007.

The Board will seek as far as possible to conduct information and awareness-raising campaigns where it considers these useful for the purpose of collecting voluntary contributions in accordance with regulation 53 of the Regulations of the Fund, with the assistance of the Registrar where necessary.

Lastly, the Board has placed strong emphasis on the need to establish its own Secretariat as soon as possible and welcomed the appointment of the Executive Director of the Secretariat. This appointment marks the commencement of the operational phase of its work. The Executive Director, acting under the authority of the Board of Directors, will have the task of promoting the principles of impartiality and transparency in the activities of the Fund, as well as mechanisms to ensure their observance.

An annual report on the activities and projects of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims for the financial year from 16 August 2005 to 30 June 2006 has been submitted to you. Like previous annual reports, it contains two annexes. The first contains the budget of the Secretariat of the Fund and the second a list of the voluntary contributions made to the Fund for Victims during the period in question.

The members of the Board were pleased to learn that the Committee on Budget and Finance has recommended that the Assembly of States Parties approve the budget which we have proposed for 2007, with the exception of the budget line on travel.

Approval of the budget proposal as submitted by the Board of Directors will enable the Fund to successfully discharge the mandate entrusted to it and to meet the expenses inherent in the proper functioning of the Board of Directors. In this connection, the Board wishes to recall the task that has been entrusted to the Director, namely to submit proposals for activities and projects that could be financed by the Fund from 2007.

In order to respond effectively to the needs of victims, we believe that the Secretariat's need, firstly, to go into the field in order to gain a better understanding of the reality of what is required so that these needs could be addressed in the most effective way, and, secondly, to pursue activities for the collection of voluntary contributions is of critical importance and should be supported by adequate provision for travel.

The Board, moreover, has taken note of the recommendation of the Committee on Budget and Finance of 1 November last to incorporate the budget of the Secretariat of the Fund into the proposed programme budget of the Court.

The members of the Board agree with the Committee on Budget and Finance that more progress is needed in the collection of funds and they have identified the need to prepare without delay a collection strategy that takes account of the various potential sources of funding and of the criteria for accepting or rejecting voluntary contributions in order to ensure that such contributions are always compatible with the aims and activities of the Fund.

The Board has also stressed the need to encourage regular contributions from States. In this connection and on behalf of all of the members of the Board of Directors, I wish to make an appeal for contributions from States Parties.

This year contributions to the Fund amounted to approximately €1,950,000. The size of this amount reflects the support of donor States and non-governmental organizations that believe in progress and in the hope that the creation of the Fund for Victims represents, as well as the values that it embodies. I wish to express to all of them my sincere gratitude.

Among the important tasks awaiting this fifth session of the Assembly of States Parties is the second election of members of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims.

It should be recalled that the members of the current Board of Directors were elected by this very Assembly. According to the rules governing elections, which reflect the desire of States Parties to give the Court a universal character, each member has been elected with an eye to equitable geographical distribution and based on the criteria of morality, impartiality and integrity.

In this regard, the Board wishes to reiterate its commitment to ensuring that the different continents, and thus the different cultures, are represented on the Board. It therefore appeals to States Parties in the Asian region to designate their representative.

The universal character of the International Criminal Court, which is reflected in, among other things, the geographical representation of the Board of Directors, is one of the Court's main characteristics. Ten Nobel Peace Prize laureates, among them a member of our Board of Directors, His Grace Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who firmly believe in the ideals of the Court have just recently made a stirring appeal to all nations to sign, ratify and accede to the Rome Treaty, which provides a forum for the victims of the most serious crimes while at the same time offering them the possibility of obtaining compensation and thereby contributing to their peaceful reinsertion into their communities at the end of conflicts.

I wish to conclude by expressing my appreciation to the entire Registry, and more particularly to the Registrar, for the remarkable assistance it has been providing since the establishment of the Board of Directors, without which we would have been able to accomplish nothing so far.

I thank you for your attention.