



ICCBA President Address to the 24th Session of the ASP – 2 December 2025

Madame la Présidente,
Distingués délégués,
Excellences,
Collègues,
Chers Amis

Je suis porteur de salutations chaleureuses de l'Association du Barreau de la Cour pénale internationale et de salutations plus froides de nos membres, qui attendent depuis un certain temps que le chauffage des salles de consultation soit réparé. De toute façon, l'inconfort existentiel semble être le thème préféré de la Cour par les temps qui courent, alors peut-être que le symbole est bien choisi.

Nous nous réunissons aujourd'hui à un moment où la CPI fait face à ce que je ne peux décrire que comme une surabondance de défis. Certaines institutions ont des douleurs de croissance ; la CPI, elle, a des migraines chroniques. Par contre, nous commençons à soupçonner que l'aspirine, le paracétamol ou l'Advil à eux seuls, ne sauveront pas la justice internationale.

Let me begin with the obvious: **cooperation with the Court**. Cooperation should be a non negotiable concept. Our clients are dependent on it. There is no room for compromise. Your States have to comply with the commitments they made by signing the Rome Statute.

Then there is the issue of **resources**. The ICC's budget is once again described as "lean." Lean! The ICC is beyond lean—it is skeletal. Defence teams cannot operate effectively without timely access to evidence, experts, and field support. Victims' teams cannot meaningfully participate without adequate

staffing, translation, and safe access to affected communities. These are not luxuries; they are the minimum conditions required for fair, credible, and efficient proceedings.

And let me not forget the current **political pressure**. The Court is criticized by States for acting, criticized by other States for not acting, and criticized by everyone else for acting in the wrong direction at the wrong time for the wrong reasons. The ICCBA has consistently stood by the Court. As stated in our recent press releases, we strongly condemn any sanctions, intimidation or reprisals that target judges, prosecutors, counsel or NGOs solely for contributing to our judicial process.

Despite the obstacles, the ICC community continues to show extraordinary commitment. Counsel continue to file submissions from airport lounges, remote villages, and moving vehicles. Why is that? Because we all dedicate our profession to what we think is well worth it, beyond borders. Differently, given our roles, but similarly to the judges of this Court who continue to navigate legal and political minefields with elegance and strategic patience.

Our Bar Association hopes to be able to remain dedicated to ensure that counsel have the independence, support, and respect required to fulfill their mandates. I say hope, because without meaningful support from your states, this might very well be the last time you have the chance to hear from the ICCBA, an organization that you have decided to recognize and that deserves and requires its space to represent those who form a vital part of the whole system. Without competent counsel and support staff, no trial, without trial, no accountability for international crimes. Defense and victims' counsel and their teams are not optional accessories to international justice—they are the oxygen that keeps the

system alive. Despite the repeated denials of our requests, the Step 5, the tax issue, the inflation, the legal uncertainty for the support staff still we persevere. If resilience was remunerated, we would all have earned fortunes!

However, I don't want to miss to express my gratitude to all states that have continuously supported us in numerous meetings and communications regarding the question of taxation of our remuneration which stays an ongoing concern for all our members who are active before this Court. I would like to extend a special thanks to Ambassador Adsett of Canada for his leadership of the Legal Aid Facilitation

Despite ongoing challenges, the ICCBA has expanded its engagement with the global legal community, signing cooperation agreements with several regional and national bar associations, building bridges of mutual support and shared professional standards.

We warmly invite all delegations to join us at the ICCBA and France's Conference national des Barreaux side event, taking place today at 18:15 in the Mississippi Room. This will be an opportunity to explore these issues

Alors oui, la situation est sombre, ~~mais nous voulons voir la lumière au bout du tunnel.~~ Mais si la justice pénale internationale nous enseigne quelque chose, c'est que persévérer face à des obstacles impossibles ce n'est pas de la naïveté — c'est une nécessité.

Excellences, la CPI ne peut survivre grâce au symbolisme. Elle ne peut prospérer grâce aux discours. Elle ne peut fonctionner grâce à la seule bonne volonté. Elle a besoin de votre soutien concret, de votre coopération constante et - oserais-je le dire - de votre courage.

Car si les États parties ne défendent pas la Cour, qui le fera ?

Je vous remercie, et je vous assure que l'Association du Barreau de la CPI est prête à poursuivre son travail — son humour intact, sa détermination inébranlable et avec un optimisme... rationné avec prudence.

Je vous remercie.