



Ms. Fatou Bensouda
Prosecutor Elect of the International Criminal Court

**Ceremony for the solemn undertaking of the Prosecutor of the
International Criminal Court**

Statement

15 June 2012

The Hague

Madam President and Mister Vice-President of the Assembly of States Parties,
Mister President of the International Criminal Court,
Your Honors,
Madam Registrar,
Mister Deputy Registrar,
Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before anything, I would like to say my thoughts are today with our four colleagues who are currently being detained in Libya, as well as with their families and friends. The Office of the Prosecutor stands with the Court as a whole in their support, to ensure their safe and swift release.

Allow me now to express my gratitude for the honour to continue to serve international justice, as I take up today the position of Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

I am humbled by the privilege, responsibility and vote of confidence bestowed upon me by the Assembly of States Parties and the wider international community. I am particularly thankful for the confidence of the African Union in me and their support for my candidature. This is yet another clear demonstration of the continent's commitment to international justice and the fight against impunity.

The one thing which every one of you can rest assured of is that I will be the Prosecutor of all the 121 States Parties, acting in full independence and impartiality. Justice, real justice, is not a pick-and-choose system. To be effective, to be just and to be a real deterrent, the Office of the Prosecutor's activities and decisions will continue to be based solely on the law and the evidence.

In turn, the Office's decisions and those of the Court in general must be respected and implemented. That is the only way to sustain and strengthen the system of international criminal justice created by the Rome Statute. It requires the efforts of all actors within the system.

When my predecessor, Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo started the work of the Office in 2003, he had two staff members with him, six empty floors and no cases ongoing. He had to build the Office from nothing and he had to develop Office strategies and working methods.

There were millions all over the world looking to this Court with immense expectations; some with scepticism, worried about the next steps of an independent

and impartial Prosecutor, while others hoped to see justice at last for situations of massive atrocities where nothing was being done.

Madam President,

As I take over the Office of the Prosecutor today, this Court finds itself in a completely different stage of its existence. I do not need to build a new Office.

Thanks to the tireless efforts and the commitment of Luis Moreno-Ocampo, I inherit a well-respected and sound functioning Office, with almost 300 staff from 80 countries, 7 situations under investigation, 14 cases before the Chambers, 7 preliminary examinations and one verdict.

From a groundbreaking idea on paper in 1998 to an incredible international criminal justice experiment in 2003, we have now, reaching our 10th anniversary, become an undisputed reality in the international arena.

However, and despite this incredible success, we should not – we must not – take pause and be content with these achievements.

For, as I speak, massive crimes continue to be committed in Darfur; Joseph Kony and the Lord Resistance Army's acts of violence continue unabated in central Africa; Bosco Ntaganda is still a fugitive of the ICC. In total, 11 arrest warrants remain outstanding. Nothing short of arresting all those against whom warrants have been issued will ensure that justice is done for millions of victims of the crimes committed by these fugitives.

Today, the Court has become a global judicial institution that is part of the greater world system. We however need to focus our attention on consolidating and understanding its role and relevance in the management of violence through effective exercise of its mandate to investigate, prosecute and prevent massive crimes. Cooperation with, and support for the Court need to be consistently upheld and strengthened by all actors.

In so doing we should not be guided by the words and propaganda of a few influential individuals whose sole aim is to evade justice but – rather – we should focus on, and listen to the millions of victims who continue to suffer from massive crimes. The return on our investment for what others may today consider to be a huge cost for justice is effective deterrence and saving millions of victims' lives.

Madam President,

As I begin my tenure, moving forward in consolidating current practices, the Office will continue to forge ahead with its investigations and prosecutions.

It will in particular also continue to look for innovative methods for the collection of evidence to bring further gender crimes and crimes against children to the Court to ensure effective prosecutions of these crimes while respecting and protecting their victims.

Preliminary examinations will remain a key element of the Office's activities and the Office will continue to ensure clarity, transparency and predictability in its decisions.

Based on the lessons learned exercises it has been conducting internally and externally, the Office will build on its experiences, identify best practices and continue to improve its efficiency.

While conducting its activities within its mandate, respectful of the divisions of functions and responsibilities established by the Statute, the Office will continue to work in partnership with the other organs of the Court, the Assembly of States Parties as well as its civil society partners. Respect for the independence endowed to the Office by the Statute must however be maintained at all times.

This is how the Rome system was designed; this is how it has to be implemented. Collaborative efforts will ensure its success. I am ready to do my part and hope I can count on the other different members of the system to do their part.

Thank you.