

## **President's speech for Solemn Undertaking Ceremony, 9 March 2012**

Excellencies,

Nine years ago, eleven men and seven women assembled to make their solemn undertakings as the first Judges of the International Criminal Court.

Today, as six of our current eighteen judges approach the end of their appointed terms of office tomorrow, five new judges have come to make their own solemn undertakings in order to replace them.

Unfortunately our sixth new judge is unable to be with us today. Judge Miriam Defensor-Santiago will make her solemn undertaking at a later date. We look forward to welcoming her then, and meanwhile send her our best wishes.

The Court's eighteen judges reflect the extraordinary diversity of the States Parties to the Rome Statute. They come from all the major regions of the world, embodying a rich variety of cultures, languages and legal traditions.

Each time we have met for this ceremony, the Court has taken further steps forward. Today we have more situations than ever under investigation or prosecution. Our two first trials are nearing their conclusions. The first final decision under Article 74 of the Rome Statute is due next week. If it results in a conviction, our first reparation proceedings will follow, and later this year we can expect our first final appeals. Important further cases lie ahead.

The Court is now a fully functioning institution, and an established part of the global system of international justice.

This does not mean that we can stand still. As we approach the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute, we need to draw on the lessons learned from our experience so far and consider how we can improve the way we work. We need to ensure that the resources made available to us by our States Parties are used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

We now have 120 States Parties – twice the number required to bring the Rome Statute into force. That is an important sign of our success so far.

Nevertheless, over 70 countries remain outside the Rome Statute system. So there remains much to do before we can say that we are approaching the universality which is one of the goals of the Rome Statute system. I am delighted that Ambassador Intelmann is making this issue one of her personal priorities as President of the Assembly of States Parties.

As a Court we are also very conscious that in order to carry out our daily judicial responsibilities we depend entirely on the practical support and cooperation of our States Parties. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our deep gratitude for all the help that we receive, and to urge our States Parties to continue to give these efforts the priority they deserve.

Excellencies,

We are assembled today in the ICC's main courtroom because the Rome Statute requires our judges, like our Prosecutor and Registrar and their Deputies, to make their solemn undertakings in open court.

It is fitting that they should do so here. We must always remember that justice is fundamentally about people, and that it is only in the courtroom that they come face to face – judges and accused, defence and prosecution, witnesses and victims. No amount of preparation, no volume of background documents can substitute for that personal engagement.

So in this special place I invite you to join me in welcoming the five judges who in a few moments will be formally sworn in as judges of the ICC:

- Judge Howard Morrison
- Judge Anthony Carmona
- Judge Olga Herrera Carbuccion
- Judge Robert Fremr
- Judge Chile Eboe-Osuji

As we do so, I would also like to pay tribute to the six judges whose terms of office will come to an end tomorrow:

- Judge Elizabeth Odio-Benito
- Judge Fatoumata Diarra
- Judge Adrian Fulford
- Judge Sylvia Steiner
- Judge Daniel Nsereko
- Judge Bruno Cotte

All of them have made distinguished and lasting contributions both to the daily work of the Court and to its development over recent years. We are extremely grateful to them.

I should also like to pay tribute to my colleagues in the outgoing Presidency of the Court, Vice-Presidents Fatoumata Diarra and Hans-Peter Kaul. In addition to their regular work as judges, they have contributed actively and energetically to the varied and challenging tasks of the Presidency. It has been a great privilege and pleasure to work so closely with them.

The responsibilities of a judge are onerous, and require an exceptionally strong personal commitment. This is embodied in the solemn undertaking which we all make.

As existing and new judges, we will all work together to reinforce the rule of law and continue to develop a system of international criminal justice of which the ICC and its States Parties can be proud. In doing so, we will always remember the countless people around the world, especially the victims and vulnerable, who look to this Court with hope and expectation for a better, more just future.