

**AMBASSADOR TIINA INTELMANN**

**PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE ROME  
STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

Your Majesty,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On July 17, 1998 in Rome 120 States made history by voting to create a permanent court to bring to justice perpetrators of the most serious international crimes. What had been a dream since the Second World War ravaged the world and before finally had a chance of becoming a reality. With the benefit of hindsight and looking at all the international negotiations that have since stalled: had it not happened in 1998, it could not have happened at all!

It is on 1 July 2002 that the Statute came into force, having been ratified by the necessary 60 States. The building of the Court started in earnest, brick by brick. Judges and prosecutor were elected; States Parties began to organize themselves around the Court to provide necessary support.

Nearly ten years later, on 14 March 2012, a man in a dark suit sits in the dock in the ICC courtroom. The Court renders its first verdict, finding Mr. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo guilty of enlisting and conscripting child soldiers and using them in hostilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Court subsequently sentences him to fourteen years of prison.

These are some of the dates that have come to define the history of the ICC.

Today, at the age of 10, the Court has become a high-profile institution on the world stage – central to nearly every call for international justice for the most serious crimes. It is increasingly busy, with seven active situations, largely self-referrals by States Parties of their own situations. It has been a journey where not a single day has been business as usual.

The International Criminal Court changed the fundamental structure of international relations in a way that few international organizations have ever done. The 121 States Parties to the Statute have agreed that no one is above the law and allowed to enjoy impunity if committing international crimes. The era of impunity is gradually coming to an end.

“The people support you, even if the leaders don’t”, is repeated over and over again in different parts of the world. The ICC has become a well-known acronym; it has given rise to enormous expectations wherever the world's worst crimes occur -- as demonstrated in all recent conflicts. “The Hague” and “ICC” are the most frequent destinations featuring in graffiti on bullet riddled walls. The International Criminal Court is *the* address for international criminal justice and calls for accountability have never been so pronounced as they are today.

However, this Court is not only about the man in the dark suit in the dock of an ICC court room, and not only about the detention facility in Scheveningen. It is first and foremost about the victims of crimes: the women who are gang raped, the children born from these rapes, the kids who are abducted and taught to kill with utmost brutality, the people who are maimed and mutilated, the countless dead. Gender crimes are defined and covered in a more comprehensive and modern way in the Rome Statute than ever before.

Victims of atrocity crimes have a special place in Rome Statute system: they have unprecedented rights to participate in proceedings and to receive reparations for the crimes committed against them. Indeed, after sentencing Thomas Lubanga Dyilo the Court also issued a reparations order. Establishing a Trust Fund for Victims within the Rome Statute System, the States Parties recognized the plight of victims of international crimes and sought to ensure that the Rome Statute has an effective reparative justice dimension. With the use of voluntary contributions, the Trust Fund is already providing rehabilitation services to over 84,000 victims in ICC situation countries. It is largely through the treatment of victims that the affected communities feel the importance and impact of the trials taking place half a world away. It is the hope that gradually they will be able to move on with their lives, beyond the often unspeakable harm that they have suffered.

Years have passed since Rome. The close bonds formed between the participants at that historic conference endure. Many have found jobs closely related to the ICC, in the Court itself or in the civil society community that keeps a vigilant eye on the Court and its States Parties. Many of you are in this hall today. I want to thank all supporters of the Court for your energy and passion. The gratitude of States Parties goes to the staff of the Court for their dedication. It is humbling to see what a well-organised and large-scale network of civil society support the Court enjoys. Thank you for standing by the Court.

We all know that there are many challenges ahead.

As the Court, after 10 years, is seeking further efficiencies in procedure and management, there is also a need for introspection among States Parties.

Some claim, and unfortunately there is truth to it, that now that the Court has really started to work and produce results, States are failing the Court by withdrawing their political support or simply by lacking the capacity to focus.

As President of the Assembly I want to remind all those present that the Court will not make it without constant day-to-day State Party support and cooperation. It is the responsibility of all of us, including political leaders of countries, to support the only permanent international instrument that allows us to bring perpetrators of atrocities to justice. States should do their utmost to strengthen domestic capacity to investigate and prosecute Rome Statute crimes. Trying mass crimes and atrocities while respecting due process rights and reaching out to communities thousands of miles from The Hague is not cheap. But this cost remains much smaller than is required for military or peacekeeping operations.

Sadly enough, the modern human of the 21st century is still capable of committing atrocity crimes. Let us stand by the International Criminal Court as it is clearly showing signs of turning into an effective deterrent.

10 years into the ICC project, a new generation of government officials is emerging as ICC-related decision-makers. This new generation did not negotiate the Statute and was not part of the

historic moment in Rome. Some may even not know the Statute by heart! The *baton* is being passed to people who are well-established in Twitter and Facebook. We should not think, however, that the quest of these young people for justice and rule of law is less pronounced. My office reached out to some well –known ICC bloggers and supporters. Let me end with the words of one of them, with many good wishes for the success of the Court:

*Global communications have made war, conflict and conflict resolution an everyday issue and have also served as catalyst for societal change. They have also increased the sense amongst people that we are all connected, we should be concerned about distant others, and that all human beings have certain inalienable rights. The ICC and its work are of interest to a wide audience and it clearly has a strong global community of people who support it.*

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