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Statement by ICC President Sang-Hyun Song

**Ceremony for launching the countdown to the
Day of International Criminal Justice**

The Hague, 7 July 2011

(Greetings)

It is a great pleasure to launch the commemoration of the Day of International Criminal Justice amidst this broad ICC family.

Exactly 13 years ago, States, civil society and the international legal community were hard at work in Rome at the Diplomatic Conference on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court.

On the 7th of July 1998, nobody could yet be certain whether the Rome Conference would succeed in its historic task. It took another 10 days of intense effort before the Statute of an International Criminal Court was adopted and the delegates could rejoice in their monumental achievement.

But one accomplishment usually brings new tasks with it, and so the international justice community moved on to the next challenge of turning the ICC from a court on paper into a living reality.

Today, the ICC has fully established itself as a permanent international institution of major significance. 2011 is the ICC's busiest year yet, and the Court's work is more important than ever.

I am delighted to see support for international criminal justice growing around the world. During the past year, I have met with representatives of governments, civil society and regional organisations in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe and most recently the Arab world. Time after time, I have found the goals of the Rome Statute resonate everywhere, regardless of culture, language or nationality.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, as we hold this ceremony to raise awareness about the Day of International Criminal Justice, let us be guided by the experience of Rome. Let us keep working hard during the ten days leading to 17 July.

Let us cherish our spirit of solidarity when we celebrate our achievements. Let us show our compassion for all the innocent civilians who continue to fall victim to unimaginable crimes.

We must be united in our resolve to defeat impunity and the lawlessness, brutality and disdain for human dignity that it represents. We must persevere.

We have a responsibility toward all those who worked hard before our time to make an international criminal court a reality one day. Let us make sure that their efforts were worthwhile.

We also have a responsibility toward global civil society and all future generations, to do our very best to spare innocent children, women and men of terrible suffering.

I sincerely hope that the celebration of 17 July will inspire more people, and new states, to join the movement for international criminal justice.

On 18 July, when we resume our work with the many challenges that we face, let us be stronger and more decisive than ever.

Thank you.

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