



**Judge Fernández de Gurmendi  
President of the International Criminal Court**

*Remarks at the  
Official Opening of the Permanent Premises of the International Criminal Court*

*19 April 2016*

Your Majesty,  
Mr Secretary-General,  
Mr President of the Assembly of States Parties,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Mr Mayor,  
Excellencies,  
Dear judges – current and former -,  
Madam Prosecutor, Mister Registrar,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today is a remarkable day - we are officially opening the permanent home of the International Criminal Court.

It is a time for celebration, thanks and reflection.

On behalf of the Court, I thank the States Parties for providing these premises. I thank in particular our Host State, the Netherlands, for providing a wonderful site for them and, more generally, for its invaluable support and hospitality. *Mijn oprechte dank voor de actieve rol die Nederland steeds heeft gespeeld ter ondersteuning van het Strafhof.*

I also wish to congratulate and thank the architects and all those who were involved in the design and construction of this beautiful building that radiates openness, environmental sustainability and respect for nature.

With its innovative solutions, the building supports the judicial mission of the ICC.

It helps us hold fair and transparent trials.

It helps us protect witnesses and facilitate the participation of victims in our proceedings.

In sum, it helps us safeguard the independence of the Court, its credibility, and, ultimately, its legitimacy.

International criminal justice is intended to ensure that mass atrocities are addressed and further crimes are prevented. Indeed the credible likelihood of accountability is key to their deterrence.

This mandate is relevant everywhere, even in places where international crimes may be unimaginable today. History teaches us that no country, no region is immune to war, conflicts or atrocities.

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Your Majesty,

Mr. Secretary General,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have arrived at this building after an incredible journey, which started more than 20 years ago.

The journey led us from New York to Rome, from Rome to The Hague, and, finally, in a shorter but not less exciting trip, from Voorburg to the dunes of the North Sea. Many times along the road, we encountered obstacles that seemed insurmountable.

Today the Court faces unprecedented judicial workload and growing relevance. The importance of a justice component in the settling of conflicts and the role of the ICC in this regard is increasingly recognized.

This is an achievement of the global community as a whole. I would like to pay tribute to the lasting contribution of numerous individuals representing states, organizations, and civil society who have worked incredibly hard to make international criminal justice a reality. I am very happy to see many of them here with us today.

They were driven by the conviction that the most serious crimes under international law present a threat to humankind and thus require to be addressed by collective action.

Without their efforts we would not be here today. The Court's commitment to justice is stronger than ever. The Court is taking new initiatives to improve its efficiency and effectiveness and meet the growing needs.

However, the Court cannot do its work alone. It needs broad cooperation for its proceedings to be successful, and for victims to participate and receive reparation.

Most importantly, it needs the determination of the global community to make accountability for the most serious international crimes a non-negotiable objective.

The Court has a global mandate but has not yet attained universal participation. Many of the world's worst conflict zones are beyond its reach. More countries need to join the Rome Statute, so that the ICC is able to address all crimes in an equal manner.

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There are huge challenges ahead.

Today's ceremony gives us all, the Court and the international community, the opportunity to make a pause in our journey to celebrate what has already been achieved, and reflect anew how we can best address those challenges.

It gives us the opportunity to think how to ensure together that the new building of the Court becomes a true icon of justice for future generations.

We have come a long way. There has been incredible progress but also setbacks. We must continue our journey together.

Thank you