



Judge Sang-Hyun Song
President of the International Criminal Court

*Remarks at the Opening of the Tenth Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for
Victims*

The Hague, 19 March 2013

Distinguished Board Members,
Madam President of the Assembly of States Parties,
Madam Prosecutor, Madam Registrar,
Mr. Executive Director, Colleagues, friends,

I am very honoured to be addressing you today at this meeting of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims.

On behalf of the International Criminal Court, I would like to congratulate Madam Rehn and Madam Vike-Freiberga on their re-election to the Board, and extend a very warm welcome to Mr. Bula-Bula, Mr. Noguchi and Mr. Toscano-Amores. I would also like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Noguchi on his election as the new President of the Board of Directors earlier today.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks you all for making your time, expertise and experience available to the Trust Fund for Victims, as an integral part of the Rome Statute system of international justice.

I am very glad to see a mix of continuity as well as new faces on the Board; I believe this is a very good basis for the Trust Fund to build on its successes so far while also facing new challenges.

Indeed, there is no shortage of challenges before us. As I see it, we are at a watershed in the ICC's history.

Last year we celebrated the Court's tenth anniversary, highlighting the distance that the Rome Statute system has come since the Statute's entry into force in 2002. It was fitting that we also witnessed the end of the first trial, the first two verdicts, and the first decision on reparations for victims, which is now under appeal.

In 2013, we are facing an increasingly complex mixture of judicial proceedings at various stages, from preliminary examinations and investigations to trials and appeals. The institution building phase of the ICC is now definitely behind us, and the Court's importance is increasingly assessed against the results we produce, not the prospects that lie ahead of us.

Our challenges are manifold; to name but a few I would mention the protection of witnesses, resourcing the growing workload of the Court, and identifying ways to enhance the efficiency of the judicial process, not least to cope with the increasing number of victims that wish to participate in various proceedings.

As we tackle the challenges of the ICC's second decade, the Trust Fund will play a key role in developing and realising a holistic vision of justice within the Rome Statute system. Not only do you represent the Rome Statute system in providing assistance to victims, but also

vice versa – your expertise based on your interaction with victims often adds a crucial voice to the discussions shaping the institutional and legal developments at the ICC.

The Trust Fund's crucial work thus far has significantly contributed to the process of rebuilding the shattered lives of victims and their families. The assistance mandate of the Trust Fund has already proved itself a powerful vehicle for aiding in the transformation of the prospects of countless men, women, and children.

The new Board of Directors takes up its duties at a crucial time, as the Trust Fund may soon move beyond its assistance mandate to the implementation of judicially ordered reparations. However it is important that this should not overshadow or replace the work done under the assistance mandate. The need to carefully balance these two mandates will be a key challenge for the Trust Fund, guided by the Board of Directors, in the coming years.

It is never going to be possible to entirely rebuild lives that have been torn apart by war, civil conflict, and egregious crimes. However it is possible to help survivors put their lives, families, and communities back together again.

We have to remember, however, that this process is going to be painstaking and slow, even after the final judicial decisions are rendered. Just as we celebrate the vision and the work of the Trust Fund, we must also be careful not to make promises that we cannot deliver.

Furthermore, I am aware that it is always a struggle to fully resource the work of the Trust Fund. While many generous donations continue to be made, there is a major gap that remains between expectations and resources in your work.

States and other actors must be willing to invest in victims if they are truly intent on turning the aspirations of the Rome Statute into a concrete reality. I pledge to do what I can to help raise awareness about the important role of the Trust Fund and to encourage donors to support the Trust Fund's work.

For me, commitment to victims is not only a question of implementing our mandate under the Rome Statute. It is also a moral responsibility. What I have learned from my encounters with victims is that many of them have incredible strength and resilience, and they have managed to retain their dignity in the face of the worst crimes imaginable.

I was truly humbled before these victims, and I resolved to redouble my personal efforts to make justice a concrete reality for those who have suffered the most.

Let me finish by offering my wholehearted commitment and support to your work. I am certain that you will guide the Trust Fund with integrity and skill. I look forward to working with you in the coming years to realise more fully the vision that we all share of justice for the victims of the most heinous crimes.

Thank you very much.