



**Cour
Pénale
Internationale**

**International
Criminal
Court**



Judge Sang-Hyun Song

President of the International Criminal Court

Statement from the President: International Criminal Justice Day

Presidency of the International Criminal Court, The Hague

15 July 2013

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Fifteen years ago, on 17 July 1998, history was made. Gathered in Rome, Italy, the international community agreed on the creation of a permanent international court with a mandate to punish the perpetrators of the most inhumane crimes imaginable and to provide reparations to the victims of such acts.

By adopting the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the world embarked upon an audacious plan to create a global justice system based on international cooperation aimed at holding accountable those responsible for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Many said that this was an impossible task, that the adversity could not be overcome. But the global justice project proved strong. The International Criminal Court (ICC) today is a vibrant, independent international organization with 122 member states – and many more have expressed their intention to join.

With eight on-going investigations, eight preliminary examinations, and the issuance of 23 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear, the ICC is undertaking more investigations and conducting more proceedings involving more suspects than ever before.

More than 12,000 applications for participation in proceedings as a victim and more than 9,000 applications for reparations were received. More than 5,000 victims are participating in ICC proceedings, giving them a voice in the courtroom. The Trust Fund for Victims is providing support to an estimated 80,000 victims of crimes under the ICC's jurisdiction.

The story of the International Criminal Court gives us hope; it is proof that audacious goals can be achieved.

While we have come a long way, we cannot afford complacency. Make no mistake – the ICC faces threats today as real as ever before. There are those who seek to undermine the international justice movement, who politicise its action, who question its value, and who purport to speak for the victims it serves. There are those who refuse to cooperate, leaving more than ten ICC suspects still at large.

That is why on this day – 17 July – it is worth pausing to gather our resolve and to affirm why we must not waiver in pursuit of justice.

We do this because we recognise the power of justice to bring a measure of peace to the thousands of children, women and men who have been made victims by crimes we do not dare to imagine, who have borne suffering we cannot bear to comprehend.

We do this because we know that accountability deters crime, and that we have a duty to the future generations who deserve to live their lives free from fear.

We do this because we know that assertions of power through violence and brutality can be no way to a negotiating table, or a seat in the international community.

As expressed by many international personalities, the ICC's presence is felt around the globe, encouraging domestic authorities to pursue accountability, pushing groups to renounce violence and embrace political solutions, and deterring leaders from the commission of grave atrocities.

Ensuring accountability is a process which we must pursue ceaselessly, and on this day, I am thankful to the people without whom justice would never persevere.

I am thankful to the victims for their endurance, support and participation. I am thankful to the witnesses who make tremendous sacrifices so that the truth can be revealed, and accountability brought to bear. I am thankful to civil society for their tireless efforts to build support and move us forward, and I am thankful to the leaders and diplomats who hear their voices, and translate their words into action.

International criminal justice is not owned by any one culture, nor driven by any one people. It is an ideal which is intensely human; it is why the International Criminal Court has been embraced across all the world's continents.

We have travelled a long way down the path of accountability, but it is a journey which will never be complete. We see obstacles on our way, but know they will be overcome. We have always moved forward, and we take no backward steps, because our eyes are fixed on the cause, because we travel this path together, and because we do so with conviction.

I am honoured to have your company on the road.