



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

Remarks at Coalition for the ICC Launch Forum

Commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Rome Statute

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Thank you, Mr Pace, thank you Bill,

I would like to start by welcoming everyone to the International Criminal Court.

It is a great honour for the Court to host this event organised by the Coalition for the ICC.

It is a great pleasure for me, personally, to have this incredible opportunity to receive at the seat of the Court so many of those very same people who worked so hard to make the Court possible.

Now, you have come from different parts of the world, some of you from far away, to see the realization of a great idea. A realization that was possible thanks to the energy and optimism of many individuals representing states and civil society in the road that led to Rome and ultimately to The Hague.

It is truly fantastic to be able to have this remarkable reunion at the seat of the Court thanks to the great initiative, yet another one, of the Coalition for the ICC – and, I would say, thanks in particular to the determination of Bill Pace.

We hope to see a series of events to mark the 20th anniversary of what is one of the biggest achievements of recent decades to advance the rule of law, a “revolution” according to some.

It is however indeed fitting that the very first event to celebrate it is organised by civil society, which played then and continues to play today a crucial and indispensable role in the making of the International Criminal Court.

This reunion provides an opportunity for reflection and I look forward to listening to all of you on what we see today and how we envisage the future.

What do we expect to see in 20 years’ time? Most importantly, how can we ensure that this institution, in which we have invested so much effort, continues to grow and thrive?

We all know that we are entering a more turbulent world, of rising nationalism and intolerance, in which the international movement for accountability, human rights and the rule of law will need to resist the risk of serious pushback. Multilateralism, which made this Court possible, is under threat.

I truly believe that what made this Court a reality 20 years ago, will also protect it in the years ahead. The key for me lies in renewing the alliance that created the Court in the first place with its powerful synergy – this is the alliance of States and civil society.

This alliance of the Rome times must be renewed, but taking into account the huge change that has taken place since then. The Court is now a reality. It exists, it is working, it has matured and it is delivering.

So, this successful alliance of the past has now three pillars, instead of two, and this fundamentally changes the dynamics of the work that lies ahead.

In the next 20 years, we don't have to create a new institution but we must together protect the independence of the Court and cooperate fully with its activities so that it can investigate, arrest, and deliver high quality justice.

We must together ensure that the Court engages sufficiently the victims and communities affected by the crimes so that they can understand, participate in, and develop ownership of its proceedings.

Together, the Court, civil society and States must ensure that sound reparations schemes are put in place that provide appropriate compensation to victims for the harm suffered in an expeditious and cost-effective manner.

Last but not least, we must work together to maintain and enhance the membership in the Rome Statute.

The Court was created as a last resort, complementary institution intended to serve as a back-up to the failure of others to investigate and prosecute the gravest crimes that affect the international conscience.

In order to be an effective and credible back-up, the Court needs to be able to step in in all situations of crimes in an equal and non-discriminatory manner.

International justice cannot be selective. Our global Court needs to become universal.

There are great challenges ahead. Seeing you all here, I am confident that the energy and stubborn optimism of the Rome generation is still with us and will continue to inspire this enlarged alliance of the future.

Thank you.