



**Herman von Hebel
Registrar 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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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to thank the CICC for organising this event to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute. The CICC led the civil society effort that tirelessly campaigned for the adoption of the Statute, and they have been a staunch supporter of the Court ever since. In this, Bill Pace, as the CICC convenor has played a crucial role and I would like to thank him personally for the many years dedicated to the cause of international criminal justice and the ICC in particular.

Many people present here today were also present 20 years ago in Rome, including myself. We have grown *certainly* older and *hopefully* wiser. But the international environment has equally evolved. The political and economic optimism of the 1990s has unfortunately been replaced with political and economic scepticism. In all honesty, if the Rome Statute were to be negotiated today, we would probably not be able to achieve the same result as we did then.

As such, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is a most precious instrument that needs full support from States, world leaders, the civil society, academia and all those who believe in the Court.

Reflecting on these 20 years since the adoption of the Rome Statute, much has been achieved but there is also no time to “lean back”. There are just too many challenges ahead of us.

We need to increase the number of States Parties and continue our efforts towards *universality* of the Statute. Only then can the Court reach its full potential and be seen by the outside world as a credible institution dealing equally with atrocity crimes across the globe.

We need to enhance *cooperation* with States. While cooperation with the Court has been generally forthcoming, many arrest warrants are still outstanding, which is a single most important impediment to the fulfilment of the Court’s mandate. We

also need to continue to encourage more States to enter into agreements of voluntary cooperation with the Court, in order to facilitate the work of the Court.

And last but certainly not least – we need to ensure that the *voice of victims* will continue to be heard and to be increasingly heard. Victims participation and reparations are unique and cornerstone features of the Rome Statute system. The success of the Court will depend not only on its judgements and sentences for individuals who have committed the gravest crimes of concern to the international community as whole. Rather, the success of the Court will also – if not even to a greater extent – depend on giving the victims voice and adequate reparation and assistance in re-building their lives.

A very pertinent example of this was when I met local religious and cultural leaders in Gulu, Uganda, at the opening of the Ongwen trial in December 2016. Thanks to an intensive campaign of outreach, fears about what the Court would stand for and possible impact on the peace process, turned around into strong support for the work of the Court, thereby leading to a feeling of “ownership” by the victims in relation to the ICC court proceedings.

In a complex governance setting – such as the ICC – it is easy to lose sight of this bigger picture of why we are here. Let us be constantly aware – in the ASP sessions, meetings of the Hague and New York working groups, of the CBF, inter-organ meetings and all others – that we are all here to serve *those whom* the Rome Statute system was made to protect: *victims*.

Thank you for your attention, and I hope you enjoy the rest of the event.