



Mrs Fatou Bensouda
Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

Commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

Solemn Hearing

Remarks

17 July 2018

Venue: Seat of the ICC in The Hague | *Time of the session:* 9:30-10.30 a.m.

Your Excellency, Mr President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,
Mr President of the Assembly of States Parties,
Mr President of the International Criminal Court,
Honourable speakers,
Ministers,
Judges,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentleman,

I'm delighted and honoured to address you at this solemn hearing in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, the founding treating of the International Criminal Court ("ICC" or the "Court").

Physics teaches us that the forward thrust of an object and the faster it moves through time and space, the greater the resistance it encounters. It is the same principle that generates waves as a ship increases speed through turbulent waters.

Whereas the adoption of the Rome Statute, with the establishment of the ICC, was in and of itself a new tidal force that changed the *status quo* of the world for the better, two decades after the Rome Conference, the system of international criminal justice created by the Statute continues to make significant waves towards building a culture of accountability for atrocity crimes.

The Statute has set the course and the ICC is moving ahead, with dedication and determination. The support and encouragement of its many proponents, and the plight of victims of atrocity crimes, are the driving force, which propel it forward.

Whilst not bereft of challenges, its work in practice is increasingly shaping norms, casting a deterrent shadow across the globe.

Our commemorative activities today, and in different capitals, offer a unique opportunity to pay homage to the Rome Statute and to reflect on our responsibilities, our methods, and the means at our disposal to ensure the enduring value of this important international legal instrument to humanity.

We are all crew members with the same mission and destination in mind, albeit with different functions, and we need all hands on deck to face the challenges inherent in the fight against impunity for the world's gravest crimes.

We must consider our respective but reinforcing roles with commitment, resolve, and resourcefulness, and with only one goal in mind: seeking the truth and ensuring that justice is effectively done and is seen to be done.

The Court will do its part by forging ahead with its core mandated activities, with independence and utmost integrity, on the strength of the efforts of its devoted staff; by continuously assessing and, as needed, improving its working methods, policies and strategies; and by advancing the efficiency of its criminal proceedings, in accordance with the highest standards of judicial administration, and full respect for due process guarantees, and ultimately ensuring that the victims of atrocity crimes have their day in court.

This, it may be clear, is not an easy task, given the complex environments in which the Court operates, strict legal criteria and thresholds, large scale criminality and insecurity on the ground, changing political climates with dwindling resource capacity, varying degrees of cooperation, and, overall, ever increasing demands for the Court's intervention.

As it undertakes its mandate, the ICC must be allowed the proper space to focus on its duties, free from unwarranted resistance. Attacks on the Court to undermine its important work or in the service of Machiavellian schemes to shield the culpable, must continue to be met with the determined and unequivocal voices of support from principled States Parties and civil society, who stand by international criminal justice without reserve or distinction.

Indeed, we are on this journey together. Each of us here today, has a responsibility to ensure we don't disappoint the victims embroiled in devastating conflicts all over the world, past or present, who have been looking with hope at the ICC's establishment and evolution. Hope that the cold calculus of international politics does not abandon them, or worse, undermine humanity's shared values and common yearning for peace, stability and the protective embrace of the law from the world's gravest crimes.

Your Excellencies,
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The velocity of change has been fixed towards a more enlightened path for humanity. The Rome Statute is a critical instrument of that progressive change in the modern era.

As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, we owe it to ourselves, our children and future generations to fully support and nurture the ever-evolving international criminal justice system, and the ICC as its central pillar; a more rule-based global order where mass atrocities are checked through the force of the law and the progress of humanity, demand it.

Today is yet another opportunity to recommit to the Rome Statute and in so doing, declare that the era of mass atrocities as merely the continuation of politics by other means is over.

We must be unwavering in our resolve to create a world that seeks justice for atrocity crimes, universally and impartially applied.

Let the Rome Statute continue to guide us towards that better future for all.

I thank you for your attention. | OTP