

Commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the ICC

Symposium, High-level segment (Conference Rooms 1&2)

Theme: "Enduring Value of the Rome Statute to Humanity"

Tuesday, 17 July 2018

The adoption of the Rome Statute in 1998 represented a "gift of hope to future generations", in the words of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Today, that promise endures. In this session, high-level representatives will expound on the lasting significance of the International Criminal Court and offer reflections on ways the international community can revitalize efforts to ensure accountability for the gravest crimes.

Chair: H.E. President O-Gon Kwon, President of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute

- Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel
- H.E. Mr. Motoo Noguchi, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims
- Ministerial representatives or speakers of parliaments
- Chief Charles Taku, President of the International Criminal Court Bar Association
- Mr Kenneth Roth, Executive Director Human Rights Watch
- H.E. Mr. Peter Lewis, Registrar of the International Criminal Court**

President Kwon,
UN Under-Secretary-General de Serpa Soares,
Mr Noguchi, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims,
Chief Taku,
Mr Roth,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

[1. Adoption of the Rome Statute]

It is an honour to be with all of you today to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court - a **truly historic moment!**

In 1998, more than 120 States, from all over the globe, came together and **made a collective commitment** to ending impunity. They recognised that the worst atrocities known to humankind could not go unpunished, and that a permanent International Criminal Court was to be created to not only address the crimes of the past, but also prevent the crimes of the future.

[2. Accountability as a joint effort; but Court depending on States Parties]

The **International Criminal Court** is undoubtedly a central part **of the Rome Statute system**, but it should be emphasised that the strength of the system comes from that **collective commitment of States**. And it is that commitment that is behind not only the ICC but also a vast network of national courts that serve as the first line of accountability for atrocity crimes. As such, the ICC and national courts reinforce each other and together ensure that accountability is enforced.

The Court's success depends entirely on the support from its States Parties. The Court is **very grateful for the political, financial and other support** it has received from the States Parties since its establishment.

[3. Beginning of the journey]

The ICC has undoubtedly helped to usher in a new era of accountability, creating a powerful momentum behind the principle of international criminal justice that will continue for many years to come.

It is developing standards – such as in the area of victims participation and reparations – that may set a benchmark for the future. Until today, more than 14,000 victims have participated in proceedings before the Court allowing their voice to be heard.

Yet, in a way, the Court and the Rome Statute system are only at **the beginning of a journey**. The Court has only recently completed a full judicial cycle – from arrest/pre-trial to reparations. So lessons need to be learned.

[4. Court's commitment to the mandate and self-improvement]

While taking stock of the lessons learnt, we must, more importantly, look towards the next 20 years as an opportunity to continue improving the Rome Statute system. The Court, on its part, **is fully committed to fulling its mandate to the best of its capacities and with self-awareness of the need for continuous improvement.**

We owe this to our States Parties, who have created the Rome Statute system and who continue to provide us with the necessary support.

We owe this to all those who lobbied hard for the establishment of the International Criminal Court, in particular the civil society organisations.

We owe this to the larger community of international organisations, headed by the United Nations, standing for the rule of law and justice.

And last but certainly not least, we owe this to those for whom the Rome Statute was adopted, the victims of humanity's graves crimes.

To *all* of you, on behalf of the Court, I would like to express **our most sincere appreciation for believing in this Court and for being together with us on our journey so far.**

Thank you!

[END OF REMARKS]