



**Cour  
Pénale  
Internationale**

**International  
Criminal  
Court**



**Judge Piotr Hofmański**  
**President of the International Criminal Court**

*Remarks*

*at*

Ceremony marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the  
Siracusa Institute for Criminal Justice and Human Rights

Siracusa, Italy  
17 September 2022

Dear Mr Thony, President of the Institute

Your Excellencies, high representatives of local and national authorities and judicial institutions,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is an honour and a great pleasure to speak at this ceremony on behalf of the International Criminal Court, and to congratulate the Siracusa International Institute for Criminal Justice and Human Rights on reaching the impressive milestone of half a century.

It is a particular pleasure because there exists such a special connection between the Institute and the ICC. You only need to read the description of the Institute's mission to detect distinct echoes of the Preamble of the Rome Statute.

That is hardly a surprise, considering that the father and long-time President of the Institute, Professor M. Cherif Bassiouni, was one of the key persons in the process that led to the adoption of the Rome Statute and the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

His lasting contributions to the field of international criminal justice are next to none, beginning with his pioneering work in documenting the atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and giving a decisive impetus to the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which would pave the way for subsequent ad hoc tribunals, and later the permanent ICC.

Professor Bassiouni played a key role in the creation of the ICC as Chair of the Drafting Committee of the Rome Diplomatic Conference, and in many other roles. Equally well known is the vast body of scholarly work on international criminal law that Professor Bassiouni created over his long career.

Obviously this short summary does not make real justice to the extensive achievements of Professor Bassiouni; however, I this ceremony in itself is a fantastic tribute to one of the greatest fruits of his professional life, that is – the Siracusa International Institute.

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

To achieve tangible, sustainable progress in any field of human activity requires a combination of knowledge, vision and commitment. These three factors come together in abundance at the Siracusa Institute.

It is a centre of knowledge, research and education quite unlike any other, and it plays a crucial role in training junior professionals in the field of international criminal law, among other things.

The significance of that mandate cannot be overestimated. Today, the world needs international criminal justice as much as ever, if not more.

International criminal law is no longer the kind of novelty it was 25 years ago, but it is still a relatively new area in the bigger picture of international law. Constant effort is required to preserve the gains painstakingly achieved by those before us, and to take the field further forward.

That vital work is to be done not just by governments and courts, but also by expert organisations such as the Siracusa International Institute.

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In our joint quest for peace and security through international law, we should always seek to support and inspire each other through cooperation and collaboration.

This week, the Institute and the ICC are putting that philosophy into practice in a very concrete way. Since Thursday, we have been holding the annual retreat of ICC judges here at the Institute. It is truly an excellent venue for the kind of brainstorming the retreat is meant for, away from the courtrooms and the intensive judicial proceedings for a few days.

And when I say intensive proceedings, I really mean it. Right now, the ICC is busier than it has been ever before.

We have a record number of 5 cases on trial this year, and more is in the pipeline. Our three courtrooms are full of activity day after day. Five other cases are at the reparation stage. The Trust Fund for Victims is delivering court ordered reparations to thousands of victims, and assistance to many more survivors and family members.

With several new investigations under way, the ICC has an unprecedented number of 17 situations before it, on several continents. Far behind us are the days when the ICC's work was mainly limited to Africa, following the referrals from governments in that region.

Sadly, there is huge demand on the mandate of the ICC. Humanity is confronted with brutal conflicts and atrocities that cause untold suffering to millions of people.

Sometimes, justice may seem like a weak weapon in the face of the gravest crimes under international law. But if we give up on the ideals of justice, accountability and redress, then what would be left of our humanity? Surely, we cannot give a free ticket to perpetrators. Surely, we cannot turn our backs to victims.

We do not pursue justice for the sake of justice in the abstract. The rule of law and access to justice are the heart of protecting the most fundamental human rights, as well as creating the conditions for the stability and wellbeing of societies. This is the essence of Sustainable Development Goal 16 of Agenda 2030.

The ICC, while it plays a key role as the lynchpin of the international criminal justice system, has no chance of stopping impunity on its own. Even with the ICC in existence, it is first and foremost the task of domestic jurisdictions to effectively implement criminal law, both in terms of holding perpetrators accountable, as well as providing redress to victims.

And that takes me back to the invaluable role that the Siracusa International Institute plays in our common effort to support and develop international criminal justice. By training practitioners from around the world on human rights and criminal law, the Institute is helping to spread the principles of justice where they are most needed – that is, everywhere where our fellow humans live. Justice belongs to everybody, regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity.

In that same spirit, one of my priorities as President of the ICC is to promote universal ratification of the Rome Statute. I trust that if Professor Bassiouni were here with us, he would join me in calling upon all of you to support me in that task. With 123 States Parties, the ICC enjoys tremendous support around the globe, but it is not enough. Billions of people still fall outside the system designed to protect humanity. Let us join forces in urging all States of the world to ratify the Rome Statute.

On that note, I end my remarks with renewed, heartfelt congratulations and an expression of sincere gratitude to the Siracusa International Institute for all the collaboration we have enjoyed so far, and which I hope will continue equally well in the future.

Thank you.