



## **"Common bonds" exhibition in The Hague to commemorate Rome Statute's 25th anniversary**

*Speech by Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the International Criminal Court*

As the Italian ambassador knows for sure the Rome Statute was adopted on July 17. In The Hague we are a bit early therefore. But since Hugo Grotius presented his ideas many years before the UN was founded in New York, I think we are on safe territory here today.

- Today we celebrate that twenty-five years ago, the international community embarked on an ambitious new path to end impunity for the most serious international crimes. Crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes should no longer go unpunished. Leaders worldwide agreed on the need for a permanent court to hold perpetrators of such crimes to account. For this purpose, they adopted the Rome Statute, opening the door for the establishment of the *International Criminal Court (ICC)* and a new age of accountability.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands regards the International Criminal Court as one of the principal institutions in the fight against impunity. We are proud to have been the Court's host State since 2002.
- Looking back it is clear that the road we embarked upon in Rome has not been an easy one. That was expected. In international relations there is always a tension between power politics and the development of international law as the basis for relations between states. The road to impunity requires patience, as justice is hardly ever quick. There have been serious setbacks, like States withdrawing from the Statute and a lack of cooperation when it comes to arresting key suspects of the ICC. And although 123 States represent the majority of the international community, still many States – including some of the major powers – have not signed up to join the ICC yet.
- Still it is an important step and on this historic day we should look to the future.
- The ICC remains indispensable for fighting impunity. The ICC has proven its relevance. Several countries and the UN Security Council have called on the ICC to investigate international crimes and prosecute the alleged perpetrators. In view of the gravity and scale of international crimes in the world around us, the Court remains necessary as a court of last resort.
- We all see that this confronts the court, as well the State Parties and the Netherlands as a host State, with new challenges. Standing up for justice has become more important now than ever.

- One of our responsibilities as host State is to take all necessary measures to ensure that the ICC can function in a safe, efficient and independent manner, whatever the context. In recent months, the various stakeholders have worked very hard to safeguard the conditions necessary to achieve that. We will continue doing all we can to support the ICC in its important task, as we face these new challenges.
- But we need to underline the importance to take up this responsibility together as international community as states.
- We must allow the ICC to fully fulfil its primary mandate: to end impunity for the most serious crimes. State Parties should combine force through political, financial and logistical support.
- Then the ICC can fulfil its primary mandate: to bring justice to the victims of the most serious crimes. We call upon states to ratify the Rome Statute and we call upon those who already have done so to further strengthen their support.
- The Netherlands has been strongly committed to the fight against impunity and will remain a loyal ally to the ICC in its endeavors.

We are happy about this exhibition and are grateful to Gemeente Den Haag, to the ICC, the EU and the Trust Fund for Victims. The purpose of this exhibition is to show that justice and reparations are essential issues that can help healing pain and loss in communities. It is meant to show that justice exists for people, here and elsewhere.