

Word of welcome by Jan van Zanen at the meeting to mark 25 years of the Rome Statute, 12 July 2023

Mr President of the International Criminal Court,

Madam President of the ICC Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute,

Mr Kelly, member of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims,

Ambassador Van der Kwast, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OPCW and the ICC,

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

A very warm welcome to the Atrium of our City Hall.

Welcome to this meeting marking the 25th anniversary of the Rome Statute.

An historic moment and one that is fitting to reflect on.

Because in drawing up the Rome Statute the world community sent a momentous signal:

That it is serious about ending impunity for the perpetrators of large-scale atrocities.

The city of The Hague is proud of the fact that the International Criminal Court (ICC) is based here.

Someone who devoted a lifetime to that was Benjamin Ferencz.

Since this spring sadly no longer among us.

He fought tirelessly for justice.

Unforgettable is his message to those sceptical of the ICC.

He saw it as a baby, still learning to crawl.

But one day the baby will walk and one day, run.

Let Benjamin Ferencz's hopeful and positive message be a source of inspiration to us.

His legacy is now in good hands with you.

The city of The Hague will also always strive to realise Ferencz's ideals.

To start with, by supporting the further development of international law here.

And generating interest in the subject by hosting exhibitions like *Common Bonds*, for example, which is currently on show here in the Atrium.

An exhibition which illustrates the important work done by the ICC and the Trust Fund for Victims in providing aftercare for the victims of war and oppression.

With perhaps the most important focus being on restoring human dignity.

Something that also plays a central role in the work of The Hague-based organisation, SEMA, a Global Network of Victims and Survivors to End Wartime Sexual Violence.

SEMA, set up with support from the Mukwege Foundation, also based in The Hague, demonstrates the role that victims and survivors can play.

We must never forget that the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity are always individuals.

Women, men, seniors and children.

Their voices must always be heard.

The Hague is fully committed to that; to achieving this in whatever way it can.

In that spirit, I wish you a successful meeting.

Thank you.