



**Cour  
Pénale  
Internationale**  
**International  
Criminal  
Court**

L'Assemblée des États Parties  
The Assembly of States Parties

H.E. Ms. Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi  
President of the Assembly of States Parties

**Commemoration of the  
25th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the  
International Criminal Court**

Welcoming remarks

**Opening of the exhibit “Common bonds”  
12 July 2023**

The Hague City Hall, Atrium C

Mr. Mayor of the city of The Hague;  
Your Excellency, Henk Cor van der Kwast, Ambassador, Permanent  
Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OPCW and the ICC  
Mr. President of the International Criminal Court, judge Hofmański;  
Excellencies;  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to welcome you to the opening of this exhibit to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Let me at the outset thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Municipality of The Hague, and the European Union, without whose support this event would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the Trust Fund for Victims and the Public Information and Outreach Section of the Registry who have been instrumental in the production of the exhibit we are about to see.

The opening of the exhibit is, as has been mentioned, part of a larger commemoration process of the adoption of the Rome Statute undertaken by the Assembly of State Parties, which comprises various events held in different parts of the world. The event is so important that we don't have an event but a commemoration process. The process is intended to enhance the universality of the Rome Statute, increase political support and cooperation with the Court's activities, and reflect on its future. I am extremely pleased that we start the process here, in The Hague, the city of peace and justice and the beloved seat of the Court. This event

will be followed by other ones to be held in New York next week, and in Rome in October, and will end at the twenty-second session of the General Assembly in December.

I am also pleased that our commemoration process starts with an exhibit entitled “United by common bonds”, as referred to by the Preamble of the Rome Statute. In our fragmented world, it is indeed appropriate to emphasize the bonds that unite us. These are the ties that prompted us to work together for the creation of the first permanent criminal court and allowed us to succeed, against all odds, in that historic evening of 17 July 1998.

Unfortunately, as the Preamble of the Statute also recognizes, our shared heritage is a delicate mosaic that may be shattered at any time. And indeed it has been shattered again and again since the creation of the Court. The atrocities of the XXth Century that led to the creation of the Court have not ceased. We witness atrocities in all continents, including nearby, in Europe.

The exhibit pays tribute to victims and survivors of these atrocities, focusing on those within the 17 situations under investigation or prosecution by the Court. For them, who have seen horror, there is hope of justice and reparations.

Indeed, in its 25 years of operations, the Court has demonstrated its capacity to investigate and prosecute in multiple situations of extremely grave crimes in Africa, Asia, America and Europe and has issued in some of them landmark rulings in the history of international criminal justice. The Court has also demonstrated the possibility of involving the victims of those crimes in its proceedings and of

repairing the harm suffered by thousands of them, either directly or indirectly, with the assistance of the Trust Fund for Victims.

Unfortunately, the Court cannot address all atrocities alike. Today, the Rome Statute has 123 State Parties, a significant number that comprises two thirds of states in the international community, but still insufficient to achieve the Court's global aspirations. Due to this lack of universality, entire situations of atrocity crimes are outside its reach. Enhancing universality, as it has been said by the facilitator for universality, Ambassador Kwast, is of crucial importance for the Court to be able to deliver to its full potential.

It is equally important that the Court receives full cooperation for its activities from the international community and that it can discharge its mandate independently and free from threats and attacks. The Assembly of States Parties is committed to take all necessary measures to enhance cooperation and contribute to the protection of the Court, its judges, prosecutors and staff, as well as of all others cooperating with it.

Excellencies,

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Twenty-five years after the creation of the Court, our turbulent world needs more justice than ever. It is the time to demonstrate that the bonds that united us in 1998 continue to hold us together twenty five years down the road.

I thank you for your attention.