



Mr. James Stewart
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Celebration of the Day of International Criminal Justice

Brief Remarks

10 July 2014

Venue: Het Spaansche Hof, The Hague | *Time of intervention:* 13:15

Your Excellencies,
Honourable Judges,
President Song,
Mr Registrar,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Prosecutor, I am delighted to make a few brief remarks on this important occasion, marking the 16th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute and the strengthening international criminal justice.

To begin, I would like to join with others to thank the organizers, and especially Ambassador Korać, for hosting this event, for this kind invitation, and for their dedication to the International Criminal Court and the cause of international criminal justice.

Since its genesis, the ICC has indeed come a long way, from an innovative design on paper to a fully-functioning independent judicial institution.

The Court has faced many challenges along the way, and continues to face them, but the ICC has taken its place in the world as an indispensable legal institution promoting justice, giving a meaningful voice to victims, and helping to prevent mass crimes that threaten the peace, security and well-being of humanity.

While the Court can point to solid achievements, much work lies ahead.

As we improve our own capacity at the Court to do justice and to fulfil the mandate the international community has given us, consistent support of States Parties and the international community is needed to ensure the ICC reaches its full potential.

States Parties must strengthen their will and national capacities to exercise their primacy of jurisdiction over mass crimes.

Political will and diplomatic endeavour are necessary to ensure that crimes are addressed at the national level in accordance with the standards set by the Rome Statute.

When it becomes necessary for the Court to exercise its jurisdiction, however, the full and timely cooperation from States Parties remains necessary if the Court is to do justice effectively.

As the Office charged with investigating and prosecuting the most heinous international crimes, we carry great responsibility, first and foremost toward the victims and communities affected by atrocities, but also to the international community as a whole.

Cooperation is essential to enable us to discharge these responsibilities.

Generally speaking, our requests for cooperation receive positive responses from both States Parties and States *not* party to the Rome Statute. There are exceptions and challenges, of course, but these are to be expected, since “push-back” in some quarters was inevitable as we implemented our mandate under the Rome Statute.

The support and cooperation we receive, nonetheless, strengthens us and allows us to conduct our work in order to bring well prepared cases, built on solid foundations, before the Chambers.

The on-going implementation of the Office’s Strategic Plan is only reinforcing our ability to enhance the quality of our operations and to ensure success.

The road to the achievement of justice in a complex, often violent, world is not without pitfalls. It can be a rocky road. But we relish the journey and do not fear the challenges we will meet along the way.

Indeed, what other choice have we? The Court was created to advance the international rule of law and to deter the commission of mass crimes that shock the conscience of humanity and inflict great suffering.

We must fulfil its promise.

The ICC represents the triumph of hope for a better, more just and peaceful world over a human history marred by mass atrocities and unchecked impunity.

In its respect for due process, in its mandate to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of mass crimes, in its striving to give voice to victims and bring them a measure of justice, the ICC represents the best hope of the international community to realise the ideals of international criminal justice.

As we are gathered here to commemorate International Criminal Justice Day, may I conclude by borrowing from a very different context the words of the late Martin Luther King Jr. in a speech he delivered in 1968, only months before his assassination. He stated:

"It may be true that the law cannot change the heart but it can restrain the heartless. It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can restrain him from lynching me; and I think that is pretty important also. And so while the law may not change the hearts of men, it does change the habits of men if vigorously enforced, and through changes in habits, pretty soon attitudinal changes will take place and even the heart may be changed in the process. [...]"

With this faith [in the power of the law] we will be able to transform the jangling discords of all the nations in the world, into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood and speed up the day when all over the world *justice* will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

The ICC offers us the opportunity to advance the cause of justice the world over.

Together we can ensure that *justice – will always – matter*.

Thank you for your attention.