

*[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]*

**Judge Theodor Meron  
President, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia  
President, Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals**

*Remarks for Celebration of the Day of International Criminal Justice  
10 July 2014  
The Hague*

**I am delighted to take part in today's celebration of international criminal justice day.**

**Today, of course, we commemorate the anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute. I was honoured to serve as a member of the US delegation to the Rome Conference back in 1998, and it is with profound pride that I have witnessed all that the International Criminal Court has achieved in the intervening years.**

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**As we know from the experiences of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal**

**Tribunal for Rwanda, the early years of an international criminal court are fraught with challenges. The creation of effective and efficient internal policies and practices, the cultivation of cooperative relationships with affected States, and the development of a coherent body of substantive and procedural jurisprudence based on legal rules and provisions sometimes being applied for the first time—these are but a few of the challenges that can face an international criminal court as it strives to carry out its mandate during the early years of its existence.**

**It is a tribute not just to the International Criminal Court but also to all of the *ad hoc* international and hybrid criminal courts that, today, calling political and military leaders to account for their acts before courts of law is increasingly the expectation, rather than the exception; that, today, we speak of ensuring accountability for violations of international law not just at a few courtrooms here in The Hague but in national courtrooms the world over; and that, today, we stand, in many ways, in a world transformed from that which existed just two decades ago.**

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**But if today is a day to reflect on all that has been achieved since 1998, it is also a day to renew our commitment to the work that remains to be done.**

**Today is a day to remember that international criminal courts are, and should be, courts of last resort—and that it is imperative that States do all they can to ensure the implementation and application of international law in their domestic legal frameworks.**

**Today is a day to remember that respect for court orders and rulings, even where one may disagree with them, is essential to strengthening respect for the rule of law.**

**Today is a day for States to renew their commitment to cooperating with and supporting the work of international courts, and for individuals to pause and reflect on why fair and impartial justice is so vital to us all.**

**And today is a day to recall that while international justice is tremendously important, court proceedings alone cannot bring about reconciliation, heal the rifts in a society, or offer closure to victims and survivors. Indeed, such aims, valuable though they may be, fall outside the core mandates entrusted to criminal courts, and where expectations are created to the contrary, it can often seem—erroneously—that international justice is failing.**

**So, today, even as we celebrate all that has been achieved since 1998, we must remember the importance of ensuring a better understanding of international justice. We must remember that, without the full commitment of national jurisdictions to international law and to the principles and standards of international law observed by international criminal courts in their proceedings, we will never be able to truly bring an end to impunity and ensure accountability for international crimes.**

**At the same time, we must remember that courts are just part of a panoply of transitional justice measures, including efforts focused on history, memory, community reconciliation, and caring for victims and survivors. And even as we salute international criminal justice today, we**

**must also pay tribute to the many individuals and groups who work so hard every day to bring lasting peace, stability, and respect for the rule of law to their communities in other ways.**

**Thank you.**

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