



Ceremony for the Solemn Undertaking

Courtroom I, International Criminal Court

10 March 2015

*Judge Sang-Hyun Song
President of the International Criminal Court*

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is twelve years since the first judges of the International Criminal Court assembled to make their solemn undertakings. Tonight the remaining four of those judges will finally conclude their terms of office - Judges Akua Kuenyehia, Erkki Kourula, Anita Usacka and myself. Our other departing colleague, Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova, who was elected three years later than the rest of us, is unfortunately unable to join us today for family reasons. The only one of the original judges who will remain for a short while longer is Judge Steiner, who is presiding over the completion of the trial of Mr Jean-Pierre Bemba.

In our places, six newly elected judges have come to make their own solemn undertakings.

The Court's eighteen judges reflect the extraordinary diversity of the States Parties to the Rome Statute. They come from all the major regions of the world, embodying a rich variety of cultures, languages and legal traditions.

Each time we have met for this ceremony, the Court has taken further steps forward. Today we have more situations and cases under preliminary examination, investigation or prosecution than ever before. Our two first trials have been completed and the third is nearing its conclusion. The first appeals judgments on the merits have been issued. Further trials are starting over the months ahead. Our new judges will be very busy.

We have come a long way in 12 years, but we still have much further to go. We have 122 States Parties, shortly to become 123, representing almost two-thirds of the UN membership. That is an important sign of our success so far. But the pace of new accessions has slowed, and well over half the world's population remains outside the protection of the Rome Statute. We must continue to encourage more States to join the ICC.

As a Court we are very aware that in order to carry out our responsibilities we depend entirely on the practical support and cooperation of our States Parties. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our deep gratitude for all the help that we receive from

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States, and to urge our States Parties not just to continue these efforts but to intensify them in the interests of the successful functioning of both the Court and the wider Rome Statute system.

Excellencies,

We are assembled today in the ICC's main courtroom because the Rome Statute requires our judges to make their solemn undertakings in open court.

It is fitting that they should do so here. We must always remember that justice is about people, and that it is in the courtroom that they come face to face – judges and accused, prosecution and defence, witnesses and victims. No amount of preparation, no volume of documents can substitute for that personal engagement.

So in this special place I invite you to join me in welcoming the six individuals who in a few moments will be formally sworn in as judges of the ICC:

- Judge Marc Perrin de Brichambaut
- Judge Piotr Hofmański
- Judge Antoine Kesia-Mbe Mindua
- Judge Bertram Schmitt
- Judge Peter Kovács
- Judge Chang-ho Chung

As we do so I would also like to pay tribute to my departing colleagues:

- Judge Akua Kuenyehia
- Judge Erkki Kourula
- Judge Anita Usacka
- Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova

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All of them have made distinguished and lasting contributions both to the daily work of the Court and to its development over recent years. We are extremely grateful to them. I would also like to take this opportunity to honour the memory of Judge Hans-Peter Kaul, who worked with us from the earliest years of the ICC until his untimely demise last year.

I should also like to pay tribute to my colleagues in the outgoing Presidency of the Court, Vice-Presidents Sanji Monageng and Cuno Tarfusser. In addition to their regular work as judges, they have contributed actively and energetically to the varied and challenging tasks of the Presidency. It has been a great privilege and pleasure to work so closely with them.

The responsibilities of a judge are onerous, and require an exceptionally strong personal commitment. This is embodied in the solemn undertaking which all ICC judges make.

From tomorrow the new judges will be working together with their colleagues to reinforce the rule of law and continue to implement and develop a system of international criminal justice of which the ICC and its States Parties can be proud. In doing so, I am sure they will always remember the countless people around the world, especially the victims and vulnerable, who look to this Court with hope and expectation for a better, more just future.

Excellencies,

Pursuant to article 45 of the Rome Statute of the Court, before taking up their duties, judges must make, in open court, a solemn undertaking to exercise their functions impartially and conscientiously.

The President of the Assembly of States Parties will witness the making of the solemn undertakings.

Before he does so, I would like to congratulate him very warmly on his election last December, and to invite him to report formally on the election of the judges.