

Statements from Members of NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court on the Inauguration of the ICC

March 11, 2003

Christopher Hall, *Senior Counsel, International Justice Program*
Amnesty International
London, England

“The inauguration of the judges is a ground-breaking moment in the establishment of the International Criminal Court. The move towards a fully functional Court sets in place a new system international justice to ensure an end to impunity for the worst crimes and justice and reparations for victims. The 18 elected judges have been entrusted with great responsibility – they have an important role to ensure that the Court is just, fair and effective.”

“The true significance of the adoption of the Rome Statute may well lie, not in the actual institution itself in its early years, which will face significant challenges, but in the revolution in legal and moral attitudes towards the worst crimes in the world. No longer will these crimes be simply diplomatic and political events to be resolved by diplomats and politicians, but crimes, such as murder, kidnapping, assault and rape, to be tried in national courts or, when they are unable or unwilling to do so, by the International Criminal Court.”

William R. Pace, *Convenor*
Coalition for the International Criminal Court
New York, New York

“[The jurists will be] the trustees of a new system of international justice.”

“The 20th century was the most violent and war-ridden in all history. So far, this dreadful legacy continues. But, ...in The Hague, with the world’s attention overwhelmed by an impending new war, one of the greatest anti-war institutions in all history will be quietly inaugurated.”

Richard Dicker, *International Justice Program Director*
Human Rights Watch
New York, New York

“ The judges’ inauguration makes this court more unstoppable than ever.”

Ambassador David Scheffer, *Senior Vice President of the United Nations Association of the Unites States of America (UNA-USA) and former U.S. Ambassador for War Crimes Issues*

“International justice will be strengthened on March 11th when the International Criminal Court’s 18 judges are sworn in at The Hague...The ICC will focus its work on the worst

atrocities and those who mastermind them. It will not be a court that the U.S. need fear. In fact, the ICC will become a powerful instrument of justice advancing the American commitment to the rule of law and international peace and security. Even minimal U.S. cooperation with the ICC would make that happen sooner.”

“These seven women and 11 men represent exceptional experience in criminal and international law. Each of the nations they come from is a friend of the United States and is rated as ‘free’ by the non-profit organization Freedom House.”

**Fiona McKay, *International Justice Program Director*
Lawyers Committee for Human Rights**

“Each step taken toward the creation of the ICC has been remarkable in its novelty and in its promise to make our world a more accountable, more just place. We have already witnessed so many success along this road: The creation of a ground-breaking Statute that has already changed the face of international law; the coming together of the international community to give that Statute effect and meaning; and, most recently, an entirely unprecedented election system that has resulted in a bench of qualified judges representing men and women and every region of the world.”

“This inauguration is no exception in its import – on March 11, 2003, the most tangible step yet will be taken toward the establishment of the ICC, an embodiment of international law and justice.”

**Heather Hamilton, *International Justice Program Coordinator*
World Federalist Association**

“The U.S. scare-tactics crumble in the face of the reality of the Court’s newly inaugurated judges: the ICC bench is composed of 18 highly-qualified judges from countries that respect the rule of law and are part of the U.S. global coalition against terrorism. The U.S. government should be celebrating this historic occasion in The Hague shoulder to shoulder with the community of nations, instead of supporting legislation containing a threat of force against the Netherlands and waging a global campaign to undermine the court.”

**Mouhamed Kebe, *International Justice Program Director*
Organisation Nationale des Droits de l’Homme du Senegal
Dakar, Senegal
[translated from French]**

“This event is of high importance and also a decisive step for a real and effective international justice. This event is also of great significance to the African states. It is a fact that in many conflicts in Africa, there are crimes perpetrated which is in jurisdiction of the ICC and victims expect a lot from the ICC. They need to be protected to receive compensation and rehabilitation.”

“Many African countries are currently in the process of adopting and implementing their legislation. They must also cooperate fully in the ICC when required.”

Mouhamed Kebe, *International Justice Program Director*
Organisati3n Nationale des Droits de l’Homme du Senegal
Dakar, Senegal

<<Cet 6v6nement est d’une grande importance mais aussi un pas en avant vers une justice internationale r6elle et efficace. Cet 6v6nement est aussi d’une grande importance pour les Etats africains. En effet, pour la plupart des conflits en Afrique, certains crimes perpetr6es rel6vent de la comp6tence de la CPI, et les victimes attendent beaucoup de la cour. Elles doivent 6tre prot6g6es pour recevoir indemnisation et r6habilitation.>>

<< Beaucoup de pays africains sont actuellement en cours d'adopter et de mettre oeuvre leur l6gislation...Ils doivent 6galement coop6rer ent6rement avec la Cour quand requis.>>

Francisco Soberon, *Executive Secretary*
National Coordination of Human Rights
Lima, Peru
[translated from Spanish]

"Latin America has been a region which has witnessed crimes against humanity in the past, and even today, we are hurting from such crimes in Colombia. The inauguration of the International Criminal Court is encouraging to us, and it is a big step forward in globalizing justice, which confronts widespread impunity. Our expression of solidarity and congratulations to the newly elected Judges of the ICC and to the Netherlands, as the host State of the Court.”

Francisco Soberon, *Secretario Ejecutivo*
Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos
Lima, Peru

"America Latina ha sido una region donde los crimenes de lesa humanidad nos han caracterizado en el pasado y aun en el presente nos duele Colombia; la inauguracion de las actividades de la Corte Penal Internacional, nos alientan, es un enorme paso en el logro de una justicia globalizada, que enfrente la impunidad generalizada, nuestro reconocimiento y felicitacion a los magistrados electos, al Reino de los Paises Bajos por acojer a la Corte Penal."

Benjamin B. Ferencz, *Former Nuremburg Prosecutor*

"Nearly sixty years ago, wearing the uniform of the United States army, I landed on the beaches of Normandy to fight for freedom and justice. I have seen horrors and devastation beyond human imagination. At Nuremburg, as a war crimes prosecutor for the United States, I peered into the remorseless eyes of mass murderers who deliberately slaughtered over a million innocent men, women and children. The victims were killed simply because they did not share the religion, race or ideology of their executioners. From this trauma came a relentless determination to strive for a rule of law where all could live in peace and human dignity, regardless of their race or creed."

"The current leadership in the United States seems to have forgotten the lessons we tried to teach the rest of the world. As Germans learned to their sorrow during the Nazi period, accepting the doctrine "My country right or wrong" is a recipe for disaster. The true patriot will support his country when it is right and have the courage to stand up and help it find the right path when it has gone astray."

"The reasons given by the United States to oppose the ICC are not shared by other nations and are not persuasive. The public should be told the truth. There are more controls on the ICC prosecutor than on any other prosecutor in human history. The ICC provides more protection of human rights than contained in the US Constitution. No person and no nation has a sovereign right to commit genocide or crimes against humanity. The innocent need never fear the rule of law. American Bar Associations and leading jurists all agree that it is in the interests of the United States to accept the International Criminal Court. In a democracy, sovereignty belongs to the people and is not impaired by accepting rules of the road that benefit everyone. Opinion polls show that most Americans support the ICC and the rule of law. The government should heed the voice of the people."