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Statement of the Presidency of the International Criminal Court on the Occasion of International Justice Day, 17 July 2009

“Conscious that all peoples are united by common bonds, their cultures pieced together in a shared heritage, and concerned that this delicate mosaic may be shattered at any time,

“Mindful that during this century millions of children, women and men have been victims of unimaginable atrocities that deeply shock the conscience of humanity,

“Recognizing that such grave crimes threaten the peace, security and well-being of the world,

“Affirming that the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole must not go unpunished...”

With these words that open the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court [“ICC”], the governments of 109/110 countries have expressed not only their belief in the necessity of international justice also their commitment to ensuring its enforcement. Today, on International Justice Day, we celebrate their efforts and the efforts of millions around the globe to give life to a vision of the world in which peace and justice prevail in accordance with the rule of law.

The creation of the ICC eleven years ago today was a small but significant step towards the realization of this vision. Where national courts are unwilling or unable to act, the ICC can play a crucial role in delivering justice for victims, in sending a message of deterrence to potential criminals and in contributing thereby to the re-establishment of peace and the rule of law.

The ICC is a global court; it has been widely accepted by countries from all continents – Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. It is a fair Court; its Statute protects the rights of accused persons and guarantees a fair trial. Most importantly, it is a Court of law. Its 18 elected judges adhere strictly to the law and ensure that all those appearing before the Court – prosecutors, defence counsel and others – do the same.

The ICC is now carrying out its mandate. It is investigating four situations, each one referred to it by the country concerned or by the United Nations Security Council. The first trial began in January. The trials of three other individuals will take place soon. With the support and cooperation of countries in arresting persons, other trials will come in due course.

The creation and early achievements of the ICC are only a beginning. Much more remains to be done to advance the cause of international justice. The capacity of national courts to investigate and prosecute serious crimes must be strengthened. Where the ICC or other courts act, their decisions should be consistently and routinely enforced. Adherence to and respect for the rule of law must become the norm and not the exception. The ideal of a world governed through law is what motivated the establishment of

the ICC, it is what we celebrate today, and it is our aim for the future.

Maanweg 174, 2516 AB, The Hague, The Netherlands / Post Office Box 19519, 2500 CM The Hague, The Netherlands
Tel. : +31 70 515 85 15 • Fax : +31 70 515 85 55 • <http://www.icc-cpi.int>
