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the legal profession\*

**IBA ICC MCC Opening Ceremony  
Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies  
at Leiden University  
The Hague, Netherlands**

**11 June 2025**

**CLAUDIO VISCO  
President-Elect  
International Bar Association**

**REMARKS**

Dear participants of the 2025 edition of the IBA ICC Moot Court.

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you to The Hague for the 12th edition of the competition on behalf of the International Bar Association.

The IBA is the foremost organisation for international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. It was established in 1947 as the United Nation of Lawyers, with the aim of protecting and advancing the rule of law globally, strongly believing that the legal profession could contribute to global stability and peace through the administration of justice. The IBA membership is currently comprised of more than 80,000 individual international lawyers and some 190 bar associations and law societies spanning more than 170 countries. Many of the international law firms and in-house counsels are also members of our Association and we also encourage judges and academics to be active and participating in our activities. Bringing together such diverse membership is the unique feature of the IBA.

The IBA aims to protect the legal profession and advance the rule of law, and advocates for the promotion and respect for human rights around the world. We believe that judicial independence and the right of all lawyers to represent their clients free from interference or persecution are essential pillars of the free and fair exercise of justice in any jurisdiction. The IBA has been a longstanding and steadfast supporter of the International Criminal Court and has consistently called for accountability for the most serious crimes, and for states to support the Court and uphold its independence without any political interference.

Since 2021, the IBA has been the primary supporting partner in the organisation of the Moot Court competition. Our commitment to the Moot Court is rooted in the conviction that it critically contributes to the formation of the next generation of international lawyers, who will carry on the fight against impunity for the gravest international crimes.

One of our priorities has always been and will be in the future involving young lawyers in our activities organising program particularly focused on developing countries. I really hope to see you all as our members in the near future.

Contributing to the development of international lawyers is particularly important at a critical time for the global rule of law, which is faced with unprecedented threats and attacks. We were all convinced that certain goals that had been reached, particularly in consolidated democracies, would never be challenged or disputed. In this context, it is crucial for us as the legal profession to be a catalyst for discussions grounded in the rule of law.

The ICC itself has been the target of the new US Administration as the IBA we reacted immediately stressing the role the ICC is playing as a cornerstone of the international justice architecture created to realise the promise of “never again” and to bring justice to victims of atrocities. The support given by the IBA, together with Lexis Nexis, to the eyeWitness Project aim at documenting violations of the fundamental principles of the civil society, including war crimes, is evidence of our commitment to the above-mentioned values.

In this framework, we are considering revamping a project we carried out in 2018, when we created a number of short videos explaining in simple words the concept of rule of law and the consequences of the violation of the same. We are in the process of issuing new videos with the aim of using them in high schools to create in the young generations a worthiness of the importance of protecting the rule of law. The Copenhagen Bar Association kindly offered to promote this project and test it in its schools starting next year.

Over the course of the next week, you will step into the shoes of international lawyers acting as counsel for the prosecution, the defence, and victims. This will allow you to develop invaluable practical experience in the proceedings before the ICC. Professor Stahn just said that this will be one of the three most important moot court competitions in the world. It is remarkable that the ICC/IBA project grew to this extent, and it is also incredible that in a week time you will issue judgements that international courts would take many years to release!

Outside of the Courtroom, you will participate in academic side events, expert discussions, and social events. I encourage you to make the most of this experience, to step out of your comfort zone, and to take advantage of the opportunity to meet highly respected professionals in the field as well as other students from all over the world.

I would like to thank the Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies for the excellent partnership in organising the IBA ICC Moot Court, Leiden University and the city of Den Hague for hosting this event, and the Moot Court Organising Committee and Organising Office, who make the competition possible with their dedicated efforts.

I would like to extend a special thanks to the legal professionals and experts who take part as judges and evaluators, many of whom are IBA members, for contributing their time and expertise to the Moot Court.

Finally, in wishing you all the best for the week ahead, I would like to thank you, the students, who are the international lawyers of tomorrow, for your dedication and hard

work that has brought you all the way to The Hague, and for your commitment to the international legal order.

Enjoy the week, and good luck to everyone for your future career!

