



**IBA/ICC Press Conference to launch Campaign Calling for
Increased Number of African Female Lawyers at the ICC**
Remarks from Mark Ellis, IBA Executive Director

Wednesday, 12 May 2010, The Hague

As Executive Director of the International Bar Association, I am honoured to lend the Association's full and unqualified support to the ICC's campaign to increase the number of women lawyers in Africa practicing before the Court.

As of January 2010, only 61 of a total of 335 Counsel registered to practice before the ICC were women.

Given the under-representation of women before the Court, the IBA and the ICC will carry out this campaign in partnership to encourage eligible women lawyers to apply for admission to the ICC List Counsel.

The campaign will focus on African lawyers, since the current situations before the ICC all concern Africa.

Achieving women's equal representation as counsel or legal assistants before the ICC is particularly important because of the disproportionate number of crimes against women in conflict.

I remember standing, in 1999, among a sea of 20,000 desperate people on a dirt airfield outside Skopje, Macedonia, listening to one harrowing story after another. I had come to the Stenkovec refugee camp to record their stories and to help create a system for documenting atrocities in Kosovo. My most vivid memory is the lost expression on the faces of the young women and girls in the camp. At first, they did not speak a word. Their silence was a veil, concealing crimes they did not have the emotional strength to reveal. Slowly, with time and the comfort they found in speaking to female counsellors, their stories began to emerge.

The brutality and systematic nature of the sexual violence perpetrated against women during armed conflict is mind-numbing. The widespread practice of sexual violence against women is more than a consequence of war; it has become an

instrument of war used to destroy the cultural fabric of a targeted group.¹

The magnitude of sexual violence against women in conflicts in Africa during the last decade is equally horrifying. For instance, recent findings at the end of the five-year armed conflict in Congo estimate that for every three female survivors, one suffered from rape.² In Sierra Leone, up to sixty-four thousand incidents of war-related sexual violence against women were reported during the country's decade long internal conflict.³

It is timely and prudent to launch this campaign today.

The Female Counsel Campaign is a unique opportunity to encourage qualified women lawyers to engage with the ICC in matters of international criminal justice. It is hoped that, through this campaign, there will emerge an increased awareness about the Rome Statute system in general, the ICC List Counsel in particular, and ultimately the number of women lawyers on the List will rise.

¹ Anne M. Hoefgen, "There Will be no Justice Unless Women are Part of that Justice", 14 Wisconsin Women's Law Journal 155 (Fall 1999) at 167. *See also* Mark Ellis, "Breaking the Silence – Rape as an International Crime," The Case Journal of International Law, Vol. 38, No. 2, 2007.

² WOMEN IN AN INSECURE WORLD: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FACTS, FIGURES AND ANALYSIS 115 (Marie Vlachová and Lea BIASON eds., DCAF 2005).

³ *Id.*

The ICC List Counsel provides a unique opportunity for women lawyers practicing at the national level to receive training, develop key legal skills and networking opportunities in the field of international criminal law and the ICC. This training can also be utilised at the national level. This is positive complementarity at work.

Most important, by increasing the number of female lawyers appearing before the ICC, this campaign ensures that women's voices will be *heard* and that women will be *seen* as playing a necessary and crucial role in promoting international justice.

As the global voice of the legal profession, the IBA will expend significant effort to promote this campaign to our member bar associations and law societies throughout Africa and elsewhere, at our regional and annual conferences, and through the Association's extensive array of publications and website outreach mechanisms. The IBA and the ICC will also jointly promote the event during the ICC Review Conference in Kampala, through a panel discussion to be held on 4 June 2010.

As more states ratify the ICC Statute and as other states begin to utilize the Statute's functions, the Court's reach will expand and

the perpetrators of sexual violence will be brought to justice. The role of women in achieving this goal, particularly through active participation in the ICC, is both essential and urgent.