

IBA Hague Office to mark Rome Statute 20th anniversary with push to wider audience of ICC equality of arms issues

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As the international community prepares to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the [Rome Statute](#), the treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC or the 'Court'), the International Bar Association's (IBA) Hague Office begins a drive to bring the work of the office, particularly on issues relating to fairness and equality of arms at the ICC, to wider legal and non-governmental organisation communities.

Over the course of the year, through a series of discussions and presentations in several forums, the Hague-based [IBA International Criminal Court and International Criminal Law \(ICC & ICL\) Programme](#) will actively contribute to the marking of the anniversary.



As an example, from 14–18 May, the ICC & ICL Programme will participate in the annual [ICC-NGO Roundtable](#), which provides a vital forum to exchange views, updates and strategic ways forward within the Rome Statute system of international justice. Also during this period, efforts to encourage civil society and the global legal community to engage to a greater extent with the work of the Court, as well as other international tribunals, will be augmented.

Aurélie Roche-Mair, IBA ICC & ICL Programme Director, commented: *'The 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute provides the perfect opportunity to bolster demonstrably our support for the creation of the unprecedented system of international criminal justice created by the treaty. It is also a good time to take stock of the crucial role civil society organisations (CSOs) play in the implementation of the mandate of the ICC.'*

She added: *'CSOs bridge the gap between the Court and local communities, which is particularly important for the ICC given its physical distance from affected communities. The relationship between the*

two sides has been especially important in the context of gathering information relating to alleged Rome Statute crimes, and in monitoring the Court's proceedings to ensure they meet international fair trial standards. Both sides have made great efforts to cooperate with each other and to move towards regular dialogue. We are in full support of these endeavours and believe that, with much hinging on such relationships, continued critical and constructive assessment of them is essential for further improvement.'

The Rome Statute of the ICC was adopted at a diplomatic conference in Rome on 17 July 1998. It entered into force on 1 July 2002, establishing the Court, an act of which the IBA has been a consistent supporter.

IBA Executive Director, **Dr Mark Ellis**, said: *'The signing of the Rome Statute was a landmark in human history. Since its establishment, the ICC has made important progress in pursuing international justice. With an increasing number of conflicts across the world, there is an urgency to bring a sense of justice to victims by confronting criminal impunity. However, a number of significant internal and external obstacles remain for the Court, and though it continues to operate admirably and with integrity, it is important to have an open dialogue about how the Court can overcome the difficulties that beset it.'*

ENDS

Notes to the Editor

1. About the ICC & ICL Programme

The IBA commenced the **ICC & ICL Programme** in 2005. The Programme monitors issues related to fairness and equality of arms at the ICC and other Hague-based war crimes tribunals and encourages the legal community to engage with the work of these Courts. The IBA's work includes thematic legal analysis of proceedings, and ad hoc evaluations of legal, administrative and institutional issues that could potentially affect the rights of defendants, the impartiality of proceedings and the development of international justice.

The Programme also acts as the interface between the Courts and the global legal community. As such, special focus is placed on monitoring emerging issues of particular relevance to lawyers and collaborating with key partners on specific activities to increase engagement of the legal community on ICC and ICL issues.

Programme information is disseminated through regular reports, expert discussions, workshops and other events and expert legal analysis on issues relevant to our mandate.

Based at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the IBA's ICC & ICL Programme consults and interacts with Courts' officials, civil society organisations, academics and international lawyers.

2. The **International Bar Association (IBA) – *the global voice of the legal profession* –**

established in 1947, is the world's leading organisation of international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. Through its global membership of individual lawyers, law firms, bar associations and law societies it influences the development of international law reform and shapes the future of the legal profession throughout the world.

The IBA's administrative office is in London, United Kingdom. Regional offices are located in: São Paulo, Brazil; Seoul, South Korea; and Washington DC, United States, while the International Bar Association's **International Criminal Court and International Criminal Law Programme** (ICC & ICL) is managed from an office in The Hague, the Netherlands.

The **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute** (IBAHRI), an autonomous and financially independent entity, works to promote, protect and enforce human rights under a

just rule of law, and to preserve the independence of the judiciary and the legal profession worldwide.

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