

IBA attends official opening of the permanent premises of the International Criminal Court

Thursday 21 April 2016



The **International Bar Association** (IBA) was among a select group of civil society organisations to join the official opening ceremony of the permanent premises of the International Criminal Court (ICC or the Court) in The Hague, the Netherlands, on 19 April 2016. In a symbolic act, **His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands** opened the Rome Statute, the treaty establishing the Court, during the ceremony, hosted by ICC President, **Judge Silvia Fernández**, and **His Excellency Sidiki Kaba**, President of the Assembly of States Parties.

The ICC was established to end impunity for the perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression and since its opening on 1 July 2002, has been housed in two separate buildings. In December 2007, the Assembly of States Parties decided that the Court should be provided with new purpose-built permanent premises. On 14 December 2015 the move to the permanent premises was completed. The new building complex houses 1,200 workplaces and consists of six towers connected on the ground and first floors. The largest tower, the Court Tower, accommodates three courtrooms and the media centre.

Aurélie Roche-Mair, Director of the IBA's ICC and International Criminal Law Programme commented: *'It is an important step for the ICC to be united in one building. This move builds on the One Court Principle to make more efficient the Court's operations and reduce internal divisiveness between the different organs.'*

Reflecting further she stated: *'The presence of the international community for the official opening reiterates the support for the Court. It was a day of celebration of the advancement of international justice, but also a time for the Court and its stakeholders to reflect and discuss the current and future challenges facing the Court, and how it will become fully recognised as an effective and fair icon of justice.'*

More than 350 guests attended the event, including representatives of States, other international tribunals and organisations, non-governmental organisations, academia and the media. Notable participants included **Ban Ki-moon**, Secretary-General of the United Nations, **Bert Koenders**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and **Jozias van Aartsen**, Mayor of the city of The Hague. **Bill Pace**, Convenor of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, spoke at the event on behalf of global civil society.

A seminar was held earlier in the day, chaired by former ICC **President Philippe Kirsch**, on the importance of the ICC as an independent judicial institution and the role of the international community. In it, ICC experts discussed States cooperation and the role of the ICC in mainstreaming international criminal justice. Also discussed was the role of the ICC in the global development of the rule of law as the 'Peace Palace of the 21st century'.

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Notes to the Editor

1. The ICC is the first treaty-based permanent international criminal court. The treaty establishing the Court, the Rome Statute, entered into force on 1 July 2002 and as of today counts 124 State Parties. The ICC's mission is to hold accountable the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole, namely the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. The ICC is a Court of last resort and as such is complementary to States jurisdiction; it only intervenes where a State is unable or unwilling to genuinely carry out the investigation and prosecute the alleged perpetrators.
2. The **International Bar Association** (IBA), 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) 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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