



## STATEMENT

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The Hague, 1 July 2013

# Remarks of Registrar John Hocking

## Opening of the Hague Branch of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals

1 July 2013

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Friends,

On a brisk evening in January last year, I received a call from New York. The Secretary-General had chosen me to become the Registrar of the Mechanism. I accepted without hesitation, impatient to start-up the newest of international criminal institutions. Much to my surprise, however, my enthusiastic response earned me more looks of apparent bewilderment, than words of hearty approval.

What else could the Mechanism possibly do – some asked – after the ICTY, and the ICTR, had already impressed in academic books, and, in the public's consciousness that impunity for war crimes and genocide is no longer free to reign. What could possibly be challenging in preserving this irreversible legacy? And after having managed over a thousand people, at times of recruitment and at times of downsizing, how could it be professionally gratifying to administer less than a hundred?

Far from craving a cushy job, I recognized the Mechanism as the challenge that it is. I saw it as the opportunity that it should be. The conclusion of the remaining cases before the ICTR and ICTY does not mark the end of the support of the international community, the toil of thousands of staff, the waiting of the victims. More lies ahead. The Tribunals' work must be preserved, the last fugitives must be arrested, and justice must run its course. I see the Mechanism as our opportunity to meet the challenge that the Tribunals' legacy do not fall into oblivion, but live on, in the actions of tomorrow's leaders. I see the Mechanism as our opportunity to meet the challenge that international criminal justice is not only fair, but also delivers with greater efficiency and less resources – so that, in the future, other courts may take a leaf from the Mechanism's book, as they have previously from the Tribunals.

Small and efficient in the vision of the Security Council that created it, the Mechanism has no shortage of responsibilities.

The Mechanism is the custodian of the largest archives of the crimes which engulfed the Balkans and Rwanda. Thousands of testimonies and hundreds of thousands of video recordings of historic proceedings, photographs of mass graves and perpetrators' diaries depict indelibly the atrocities that stained churches, farms, stadiums, and public offices. If not preserved, and if not made accessible, this unparalleled collection will not serve its purpose to remind and teach.

More and more domestic jurisdictions, near or far from where the crimes occurred, perpetuate the Tribunals' work in their courts. Their efforts are a tangible sign that the fight against impunity does not end with the Tribunals, but continues within their national borders and beyond our Statutory boundaries. These courts deserve applause and encouragement. At the Mechanism, we strive to build their capacity and provide them with technical support.

The Tribunals would not achieve justice, if the persons they convicted did not serve their time. But it would not be a justice we can be proud of, if their prisoners' rights were violated. The Mechanism vigilantly watches over both: that sentences are enforced and that convicts are treated with that fundamental respect, pertaining to

the inherent dignity and value of all human beings, even those found to have tainted their souls with the world's most shocking crimes.

Nearly 10,000 witnesses from all walks of life, but mostly ordinary women and men of humble origins, recounted to the Tribunals' Judges - and the world - the speeches they heard, spreading hatred and inciting violence; the corps they saw, disfigured from the mass graves yet strikingly familiar; the wounds they felt, still tormenting their bodies and hearts twenty years later. Their support and protection continues in the capable hands of the Mechanism's witness specialists.

One year ago, the Mechanism opened its doors in Arusha. Since its first day, the Registry has worked to the highest international archival standards, served national jurisdictions, inherited the enforcement of ICTR sentences, and continued to protect its witnesses. The provision of these services could suffer no gap in their transfer to the Mechanism. And no gap was suffered.

In the appeals and contempt matters before the Mechanism, the Registry has provided all necessary support to the Judges and the Parties, be it by ensuring that the indigent accused have access to highly qualified defence, or developing governance documents to translate into the daily court work the ideal of fair and efficient proceedings. The Mechanism will be able to count on the same support when Kabuga, Bizimana and Mpiranya are finally brought to justice, and "zero fugitives" will be etched in bold on the Mechanism's wanted list, like it is today on the ICTY's.

With the ongoing, vital support of the ICTR and ICTY, for which I am profoundly grateful, we designed lean administrative infrastructures, offered cutting-edge services, meticulously recruited some 60 staff of 28 nationalities - from Albania to Zimbabwe - blessed with a variety of talents and a shared resolve to make the Mechanism a success.

With no existing instruction manual, but driven by the ambition of its Principals and its staff to achieve, not only has the Mechanism Arusha branch preserved the attainments of the ICTR, but it has built on them, enhancing the efficiency of its operations. One year on and one branch into the job, the first results are already visible. More will follow, starting from today as the Mechanism reaches its full strength.

Whether we draw this resolve from the Mechanism's founding documents or the ever increasing calls for a more expeditious and less onerous international justice; whether we are called to it inspired by the indefatigable strength of the survivors, our renewed commitment and sharpest creativity will once again further the advancement of international criminal justice.

Thank you.