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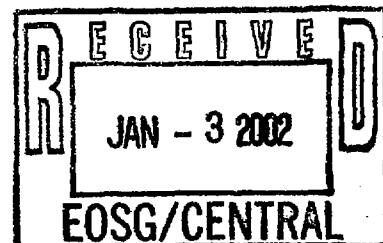
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**ADDRESS TO THE MEETING OF THE  
ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE  
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT  
New York, 10 September 2002**

**Mr. President, [Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini]**

*let me first*

**[I would like to] congratulate you on your  
election as President of the first session of the  
Assembly of States Parties to the Rome  
Statute of the International Criminal Court.  
You can count on my full support as you  
carry out your formidable responsibilities.**



**Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said:**

**“We shall have to repent in this generation,  
not so much for the evil deeds of the wicked  
people, but for the appalling silence of the  
good people”.**

**In adopting the Rome Statute of the  
International Criminal Court, which entered  
into force on 1 July, good people spoke up -- on  
behalf of the innocent victims of horrendous  
crimes, and in the name of international law.  
An idea that arose in the aftermath of the  
Holocaust and other atrocities committed during  
the Second World War has finally come to  
fruition.**

**In 1948, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Genocide Convention signified the beginning of a new era in the struggle for fundamental rights and freedoms. But as the ICC takes its first steps, the quest for basic liberties has still to be won. Millions of human beings continue to be subjected to brutality of the worst sort, and denied freedoms that others take for granted. You have gathered here, in this first Assembly of States Parties, to give the ICC the operational tools with which to do its part to improve this sad state of affairs.**

**Earlier tribunals, like those of Nuremburg, Tokyo, Arusha and the Hague, were established after the fact. The ICC is different. It gives *advance* warning that the international community will not stand by but will be ready, immediately, if crimes within the Court's jurisdiction are committed.**

**Indeed, by its very existence, the Court can act as a deterrent.**

**Countries that have established proper national criminal justice systems have nothing to fear from the Court. And those that do not yet have such<sup>o</sup> systems in place can benefit from what it has to offer. But where national criminal justice systems are unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute, the ICC will step in.**

**Your responsibility is to ensure that the Court begins life on secure footing. That means giving it a strong financial <sup>backing</sup> base. And it means that the judges, Prosecutor and other high officials must meet the highest standards of legal rigour, human sensitivity and professional probity. States must take special care to nominate and elect to these key positions individuals who have a wealth of experience and the qualities and qualifications needed to dispense international justice fairly and with wisdom.**

**Above all, the independence, impartiality and integrity of the Court must be preserved. The ICC is not – and must never become -- an organ for political witch hunting. Rather, it must serve as a bastion against tyranny and lawlessness, and as a building block in the global architecture of collective security.**

**The Rome Statute provides a strong foundation for this work. It contains safeguards and checks and balances to ensure that justice is done and is seen to be done. And it sets out high standards of human rights, fairness and due process.**



**The growing number of parties to the Rome Statute is very encouraging. I urge other States to follow your example. I would like to express my great appreciation to the civil society groups and others whose advocacy has helped bring us to this day. And I would like to express the hope that non-States Parties – including those that have signed the Statute but not yet ratified it – will give the Court the support it needs to succeed.**

Mr. President,

These are daunting times for humankind.

But at long last, the world has this ~~long~~<sup>miss</sup>

~~dreamt-of vehicle~~<sup>link</sup> for the advancement of

peace, this new institution with which to battle

impunity, this court of law where formerly

untouchable perpetrators, regardless of their

rank or status, can be held accountable for

their crimes.

**The drive for justice has always been an integral part of the quest for international peace. As the Court now takes up its formidable responsibilities, the United Nations looks forward to working in partnership with you in that pursuit.**

**Thank you very much.**