



Speech of the ICCBA President Opening of the ICC Judicial Year – 18 January 2019

Excellencies, Your most distinguished honors, Madam Prosecutor and Mr. Registrar,

I am honored to be here today to represent all members of the International Criminal Court Bar Association on this important occasion of the opening of the judicial year of the International Criminal Court, and would like to thank His Excellency President Chile Eboe-Osuji for the privilege to speak at today's special ceremony.

Last year was a momentous year marking the 20th Anniversary of the Rome Statute and this year should continue the heightened momentum for international justice. This is an opportunity for the ICCBA to strongly reaffirm our unwavering support for the universal values enshrined in the Rome Statute, including the right to fair and expeditious proceedings.

Excellencies, your most distinguished honors, the election of new principals at the Presidency of the ICC and the Registry, last year, has reinvigorated the ICC and its mandate and the ICCBA reiterates its full support of the principals and judiciary of the ICC. The ICCBA occupies an important role, acting as a bridge between victim and defence counsel and their teams and the Court. The ICCBA continues to play an instrumental role in building relationships and providing assistance to the organs of the Court and will continue throughout the coming year and beyond.

Even as we celebrate the achievements of the ICC, we need to remain mindful and strive to continue improvements and ensure that the ICC continues to uphold the rule of law and the highest standards of justice. While we do not know what lies ahead in the future, we need to keep thinking ahead to strengthen and empower the ICC of tomorrow.

As we gather this morning to mark the Opening of the Judicial Year, it is fitting for me to speak about the steps that ICCBA is taking on some pertinent issues.

The Association has been actively involved in the current review of the legal aid system. A core component of a strong, effective and just ICC is a properly resourced and administered legal aid system to ensure the highest level of competency in legal representation at the Court. The ICCBA appreciates the efforts of the Registrar to reform the legal aid system and pledges to continue working with the Court in a constructive and diligent manner to develop proposals for a properly funded, fair, efficiently administered, and effective legal aid system that is worthy of the high quality of justice demanded by the Rome Statute.

The ICCBA has also organized training for members on both substantive and procedural law and will continue with this throughout this judicial year to ensure the highest levels of competence of counsel.

On the critical issues of ethics, professional responsibility, and the right to a safe working environment, the ICCBA has taken strong and clear action. The ICCBA has issued guidance to all victim and defence team members on their obligations under the Code of Professional Conduct with regards to preventing harassment in the workplace and we are in the process of establishing a complaints mechanism which we hope will be implemented in the coming months. We welcome collaboration with the other organs of the ICC on this important initiative throughout the judicial year.

The ICCBA is now firmly established as the primary representative body of counsel and support staff before the Court. A key objective of the ICCBA is mandatory membership of the Association for all List Counsel. Mandatory membership would secure the independence of the ICCBA and its capacity to maintain a high level of professional competence and high ethical standards among counsel and support staff. The ICCBA requests Your Honors to support this proposal during this judicial year.

On behalf of the ICCBA, Your Excellency, Your honors, and all of you gathered here today, I wish you all the best for the new judicial year and the ICCBA looks forward to supporting the ICC throughout the coming year.

Thank you very much.