



United Nations  
Nations Unies



International  
Criminal Tribunal  
for the Former  
Yugoslavia

Tribunal Pénal  
International pour  
l'ex-Yougoslavie

# ADDRESS

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## Remarks by ICTY President, Judge Carmel Agius Symposium Inauguration

Distinguished Guests good morning, and in particular Mme Deputy Mayor, thank you very much for delivering such an inspiring address.

25 years ago today, the United Nations General Assembly met to discuss what one delegate called at the time the “continuing tragedy” in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Speaker after speaker took the floor to denounce the ethnic cleansing then taking place and the heinous crimes being committed against thousands of innocent civilians. 44 separate delegations jointly sponsored a draft resolution, which was promptly adopted by the community of nations. 102 Member States voted in favour, zero voted against.

Through Resolution 47/121, the international community not only expressed its grave concern at the terrible fate being forced upon the Bosnian population, it also called upon the Security Council to discharge its duty to maintain international peace and security. Specifically, it urged the Security Council to consider establishing an ad hoc international war crimes tribunal.

The seeds of the ICTY were thus sown exactly a quarter of a century ago. Within six months the Tribunal was established, with its seat in this beautiful city, The Hague, and a mandate that covered the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia. Judges were elected a few months afterwards, and the ICTY’s work progressively blossomed through a series of firsts: the first indictment, the first arrest, the first trial, the first guilty plea, and so on. As the Tribunal matured, so too did international criminal justice, and our legal procedures and jurisprudence were soon used to cross fertilise the demands for similar justice found all over the globe. Having now delivered judgements in the final trial and the final appeal, the ICTY is proud to gather at today’s Symposium for a final reflection on the fruits of our labour.

The ICTY Legacy Dialogues have fostered a number of successful events already. Our conference in Sarajevo focused primarily on the regional legacy of the ICTY. We screened documentaries there, as well as in Belgrade and Zagreb, and we will launch a new documentary here today. Nuremberg and New York have hosted insightful events, as have San Remo and The Hague. Lectures and discussions have captured the institutional knowledge of the Tribunal for posterity, and our legacy publications have both recalled our innovative Outreach Programme and provided groundbreaking analysis on the experience and views of our witnesses. I am also glad to report that some of the findings of the ICTY Legacy Dialogues and the Sarajevo Conference will be captured in a major book, published in cooperation with Leiden University and Oxford University Press, which will provide a multidisciplinary account of the Tribunal’s merits and challenges. It brings together inside and outside perspectives and will complement the numerous publications already in existence that examine our contributions.

Today’s symposium is intended to further distill the core of the Tribunal’s legacy in three important areas: first, our best practices and lessons learnt, from which other international courts and tribunals will benefit; second, our achievements and limitations with respect to the region of the former Yugoslavia; and third, our development of crimes, modes of responsibility, and procedure as a new field in international law. In particular, it aims to

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discern what lies ahead for international criminal justice, and in the final session the speakers will present their vision for the future.

25 years after the world first united to champion the role of an international criminal tribunal, we are looking back today, so that we may continue to move forward tomorrow.

We are privileged to hear from an array of expert panellists, and to be guided by moderators with unparalleled experience in our field. The Tribunal remains grateful for the support of our partners and donors throughout the ICTY Legacy Dialogues series, including those who contributed to the realisation of today's Symposium: the European Union; Austria; Finland; Germany; Malta; the Netherlands; Switzerland; the Municipality of The Hague; and the Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies. With this last mention I am glad to give the floor to Professor Carsten Stahn who has supported our legacy work and will now present welcoming remarks.

I hope that you will join me in thanking them for today's event in these beautiful new academic premises.

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