



STATEMENT

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Arusha, 16 February 2015

Address at the inaugural ceremony of the African Institute of International Law Judge Theodor Meron President, Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals 16 February 2015

Good morning. I am deeply honored by the invitation to speak at this Inaugural Ceremony of the African Institute of International Law, and would like to thank Ambassador Sani Mohammed, its Rector. I particularly enjoyed hearing the keynote speech from my Hague neighbor, Judge Yusuf, Vice President of the ICJ and President of the Curatorium of the Institute. I would also like to acknowledge other distinguished persons in attendance, including the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, the President of the ICTR, the Prosecutor of the ICTR and Mechanism, and the President of the East African Court of Justice. More broadly, I wish to extend a warm message of goodwill to all of you attending this inaugural ceremony.

International law has become increasingly important throughout the world, and Africa is no exception. However, despite its significance, international law is sometimes poorly understood and even misrepresented. Thus this initiative of the African Union and the Tanzanian government is especially positive. Organizations like the African Institute, which promote research and teaching to the benefit of students, scholars, government and private sector officials, can play a crucial part in developing international law and in clarifying its parameters—helping to elucidate its benefits, limitations, and the ways in which it is inextricably linked to national, regional, and global norms.

In this regard, I note that I have, for many years, been a member of the Institute of International Law, which since its founding in 1873, has supported the development and implementation of international law, to the broader end of promoting peace and prosperity throughout the world—a fact recognized by the award of a Nobel Peace prize. It is my great hope that the African Institute can build upon and expand upon efforts like those of the Institute for International Law. At a time where there has been harsh criticism of the work of international criminal tribunals, I believe the African Institute has an especially significant role to play. By promoting sober reflection and scholarship, the African Institute can serve as a key interlocutor in supporting reasoned dialogue about the ways in which international legal institutions can support the rule of law and, more broadly, peaceful relations and economic development.

I must admit that it gives me particular pleasure to mark the inauguration of the African Institute in Arusha. As President of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, and as a longstanding member of the ICTR Appeals Chamber, I have been visiting this city for many years. Over time, I have witnessed an increased concentration of Arusha-based institutions and initiatives focused on promoting the rule of law—including the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Mechanism, and, now, this Institute. This development, so reminiscent of The Hague, increases the potential for fruitful collaborations and sharing of ideas, to the benefit of Africa and the broader international community.

In this spirit, as the Mechanism assumes additional responsibilities over the next year, we will inaugurate our new building, complete with the largest collection of legal materials in East Africa derived from both the ICTR and the Mechanism. These will be available not just to Mechanism staff

but also to lawyers, students, and the public. I am also convinced that our institutions can cooperate in numerous ways to promote legal research and teaching on a national level. As a first step in this direction, the Mechanism is working with representatives of the judiciary and legal academia to create programs that will allow knowledge sharing between Mechanism representatives, Tanzanian Judges and students, and, of course, our friends from the ICTR. I very much hope that we can cooperate with the African Institute on these and other relevant initiatives.

I am quite sure that the African Institute will face various challenges over the coming years, as all new organizations do. However, seeing the enthusiasm, dedication, and quality of the friends assembled here, I am convinced that the African Institute will not only overcome any obstacles, but will also serve as a valued partner in broader efforts to overcome the many political and economic challenges facing Africa and the world. I look forward to cooperating with such efforts.

For today, I will conclude by underscoring again my happiness that the African Institute is officially inaugurated, and extending my congratulations to its founders and staff, as well as to its supporters in the Tanzanian government, the African Union, and the United Nations.

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