

18 July 1998

**STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI
ANNAN
AT THE CEREMONY HELD AT CAMPIDOGLIO CELEBRATING THE
ADOPTION
OF THE STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is indeed a historic moment.

Two millennia ago one of this city's most famous
sons Marcus Tullius Cicero, declared that "in the midst of arms, law stands mute".

As a result of what we are doing here today, there is real hope that that bleak statement
will be less true in the future than it has been in the past.

Until now, when powerful men committed crimes against humanity, they knew that as
long as they remained powerful no earthly court could judge them.

Even when they were judged - as happily some of the worst criminals were in 1945 - they
could claim that this is happening only because others have proved more powerful, and
so are able to sit in judgement over them. Verdicts intended to uphold the rights of the
weak and helpless can be impugned as "victors' justice".

Such accusations can also be made, however unjustly, when courts are set up only ad hoc,
like the Tribunals in the Hague and in Arusha, to deal with crimes committed in specific
conflicts or by specific regimes. Such procedures seem to imply that the same crimes,
committed by different people, or at different times and places, will go unpunished.

Now at last, thanks to the hard work of the States that participated in the United Nations
Conference over the last five weeks - and indeed for many more months before that - we
shall have a permanent court to judge the most serious crimes of concern to the
international community as a whole: genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Other crimes, wherever and whenever they may be committed, may be included in the
future. The crime of aggression is already mentioned in the Statute.

For the United Nations, this decision has special significance. We never forget that our Organization has its origins in a global struggle against régimes which were guilty of mass murder on a horrendous scale. And unhappily we have had to deal all too recently, in Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia, with new crimes of the same appalling nature, if not quite of the same magnitude.

By adopting this Statute, participants in the Conference have overcome many legal and political problems, which kept this question on the United Nations agenda almost throughout the Organization's history.

No doubt, many of us would have liked a Court vested with even more far-reaching powers, but that should not lead us to minimize the breakthrough you have achieved. The establishment of the Court is still a gift of hope to future generations, and a giant step forward in the march towards universal human rights and the rule of law.

It is an achievement which, only a few years ago, nobody would have thought possible.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to be here in person; to place in your custody the Final Act of the Conference; and to transmit to you the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court adopted yesterday. From now on, the Statute will bear the name of this Eternal City, in fitting tribute to the people of Rome and of Italy who have hosted this Conference, and to their Government which worked tirelessly for its successful conclusion.

The Statute was opened yesterday for signature. Some States have already signed it, and more will do so during this ceremony. It will remain in your hands until 17 October 1998. After that it will be deposited with me, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, and will stay open for signature in New York until 31 December 2000.

It is my fervent hope that by then a large majority of United Nations Member States will have signed and ratified it, so that the Court will have unquestioned authority and the widest possible jurisdiction.

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