

Solemn hearing for the opening of the International Criminal Court's judicial year

23/01/2024



On 19 January 2024, the First President was invited to the opening of the judicial year at the International Criminal Court (ICC). He was represented by President Mr. Bruno Cathala, Honorary President of the Chamber of the Court of Cassation.

During the hearing, the heads of three organs of the ICC, the President, the Prosecutor and the Registrar, took the floor in turn. The heads of court welcomed the presence of numerous representatives of national supreme jurisdictions, regional and international courts, the diplomatic corps, civil society and international organisations.

ICC President Mr. Piotr Hofma ski expressed that 2023 had been an extremely intense year, both in terms of judicial proceedings and investigations and reparations. He anticipates a similarly heavy workload in 2024. He emphasised the ICC's wish to see the arrest warrants issued executed, and asked for the support of the States Parties in arresting the suspects, as only they have police forces.

Prosecutor Mr. Karim Khan shared this wish, noting that the opening of the judicial year is a moment of hope, promise and expectation for victims throughout the world and for humanity as a whole, for more justice and less crime.

The Registrar, Mr. Osvaldo Zavala Giler, emphasised the security issues facing the Court, which operates on five continents, issues which, in his view, threaten the very essence of the institution. In his view, security, a necessary

condition for the independence of justice, is a crucial prerequisite for the success of the ICC's operations.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Proulx, President of the The Bar Association of the International Criminal Court (ICCBA), was also given the floor.

Finally, Ms Stella Isibhakhomen Anukam, a judge at the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, gave a guest speech highlighting the essential role of judicial institutions in restoring and consolidating peace by facilitating the maintenance of public order and promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The solemn hearing was followed, as every year, by a judicial seminar held under Chatham House rules, bringing together ICC judges and over forty magistrates from international, regional and national courts. The seminar focused on the role and rights of victims in the context of judicial responses to international crimes. After a presentation by an ICC judge on the Court's practice, the exchange between the participants once again demonstrated the difference between judges from the two main legal traditions, civil lawyers, who have long worked with civil parties, and common lawyers, who have discovered in recent years the importance for social peace of hearing victims and taking their dignity into account.

This event and these exchanges highlight the importance of dialogue between national and international judges in the reform of judicial procedure and in the smooth running of criminal operations.

Jurisdictions

International

Institutional relations