

**Statement by Mr. William R. Pace
Convenor, Coalition for the International Criminal Court**

**Official Opening of the Permanent Premises of the
International Criminal Court**

**Tuesday, 19 April 2016
The Hague, The Netherlands**

Your Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and
His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations
President Sidiki Kaba
President Fernández
Minister Koenders
Mayor van Aartsen

**Excellencies, colleagues, ICC staff, and may I address also the victims of the crimes against
humanity,**

I have the great honor to speak on behalf of an extraordinary global network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)-with millions of women and men, young and old, in over 150 nations - and on behalf of the thousands who contributed in the decade leading to the 1998 treaty, and on behalf of the hundreds of thousands who contributed to securing the ratification or accession of what is now 124 governments to the Rome Statute.

Very late in the night on July 17, 1998, I had the honor to congratulate the UN Member States that adopted, against almost all expectation, in a vote of 120 yes and 7 no, the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. I noted then that most of history is the never-ending narratives of wars won and peace lost, but July 17, 1998 would be remembered in history as a day that peace won and war lost.

Today, we are gathered to celebrate the opening of what is being hailed as the 'peace palace of the twenty-first century.'

Tomorrow, Mr. Secretary-General, you celebrate a solemn anniversary of the International Court of Justice – whose wonderful home opened 100 years ago during what was then the eve of the worst great “world war” in history, and whose 70th anniversary marks the conclusion of the even more catastrophic second “world war”.

Ominously, it must be noted that we are gathered in another time of the horrific spread of war, terrorism, refugees, genocide and massive crimes against humanity. Today the Coalition is fiercely opposing the new waves of impunity, xenophobia, and denials of history and accountability.

We consecrate today the premises of the world’s **permanent** International Criminal Court, formed from the Rome Statute that entered into force just a short 14 years ago - a new world court already being asked to investigate a great number of terrible crimes against humanity that have occurred throughout the world.

However, Your Royal Highness, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, 2016 is not 1914 or 1946. The UN Charter and strengthening of the international legal order in the last 70 years will, I believe, be recognized as unprecedented in world history. The strengthening of international criminal justice in the last 20 years, and especially the adoption of the Rome Statute and the establishment of the new system of international criminal justice and this great Court, will be viewed as revolutionary advancements of peace and the rule of law.

That many of the greatest instruments of peace, international humanitarian and human rights law could not be adopted today must only reinforce our commitment, our strength to protect the statute and the Court, and enhance our celebration of this great institution today.

In closing, on behalf of global civil society, I want to congratulate the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the City of The Hague for their enormous contributions to the rule of law since the 1899 Peace Conference, and I want to congratulate you, Mr. Secretary-General and your two predecessors, Secretary-Generals Annan and Boutros-Ghali for your historic support for creation and establishment of the ICC.

History will owe a tremendous debt to the partnership of the Coalition and the 70 like-minded governments - mostly the mid-size and small democracies - that stood up to the biggest powers and dictatorships who were trying to prevent the ICC being established, and who must stand up again to reject the ongoing serious threats and challenges to the ICC and the Rome Statute.

We celebrate, too, the prospect of the anniversaries of this great institution of peace a century from now.

Thank you very much.