



PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION
ACCIÓN MUNDIAL DE PARLAMENTARIOS
PARLENTARIËRS VOOR GLOBAL ACTION

**PARLIAMENTARY REGIONAL SEMINAR:
INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY: THE ROLE OF THE ICC**

**Opening Speech
Dr. Ruth Wijdenbosch, MP
Paramaribo, 6 June 2008**

President of the Republic of Suriname,
Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honourable members of Diplomatic Corps,
Vice President of the International Criminal Court,
Assistant Secretary General of the OAS,
Secretary General of the Community of Caribbean States represented by Mr. La Ronde
President of Parliamentarians for Global Action-- PGA,
Convenor of the International Law and Human Rights Programme of PGA,
Members of PGA,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Suriname Working group of PGA, a group of members of parliament in Suriname working on the ICC, I welcome you in our country. We are very honoured that you accepted our invitation. For those of you who arrived this morning after a long journey I hope that you were able to sleep a little bit.

Let me first start by expressing my appreciation and thanks to my colleagues of GA, the President and my dear colleagues in the Executive Committee, also the Chair of the International Council and the staff of PGA for their support and I might add—for their patience—with me during the preparations for this seminar.

Also a word of thank to the Speaker, the members and staff of the National Assembly and the Suriname Working Group of PGA for their efforts to accomplish our goal to organize this seminar.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The year 2008 is a very important year for the International Criminal Court. In July we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Rome Statute by which the international community of states established an international criminal court.

As you know the Caribbean, represented by the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and PGA member H.E. A.N.R. Robinson has successfully launched a resolution in 1989 before the United Nations General Assembly proposing the establishment of an International Criminal Court. Today we are very proud of the contribution made by Mr. Robinson.

Thanks to him and other founding fathers and mothers of the ICC we feel more safe and secure in a world where at least the rules are laid down, and if serious crimes against humanity are committed, we have a mechanism to repress them, hence to prevent them.

It is up to us, members of parliament of the Caribbean and the Americas to keep his legacy alive by committing ourselves to this noble goal and work toward adopting the principles of the international criminal court in our national legislation.

Taking the above into consideration i call upon my fellow parliamentarians from the CARICOM member states to urge your respective government to include support for the ICC in the statement of the meeting of heads of government to be held in Antigua and Bermuda coming 2nd to 4th of July.

We also welcome the commitment made by the Organization of American States adopting an important yearly resolution expressing their full support and cooperation with the ICC.

For many years now members of parliament from the entire world, grouped under the PGA flag have been very active in the field of promoting peace, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

I am very grateful for the support that these parliamentarians and its secretariat have provided me and other members of the National Assembly in working on Suriname to become a member state of the International Criminal Court. We faced some obstacles but we were determined to look into the future, and to let our people benefited from the extra safeguard provided by the International Criminal Court.

Since its establishment in 2002, and through its operations the Court continues to prove able to abide to the rules laid down by the States in the Rome Statute and function as an effective, independent, non-political institution in the fight against impunity.

It is with great proud and satisfaction that I am able to inform you that a draft proposal prepared by the Minister of Justice and Police and the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the accession of Suriname of the Rome Statute has been approved by the Council of Ministers.

The President will transmit the Accession bill to the National Assembly after advice of the Council of State.

With the political parties from government coalition and the opposition in Parliament expressing their support for the International Criminal Court, I foresee that on the date of the Celebration in New York of 10th Anniversary of the Statute, Suriname will become a state party.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here with members of parliament and experts who are real promoters of the ICC. They have the knowledge and experience in this field. We will benefit from this opportunity to discuss the challenges they faced on the road to become a member of the ICC.

Dear colleagues, this seminar depends on four things to be a success. The first condition has been achieved, namely your presence, your interest and energy.

The second condition relies on expressing our doubts, our concerns, and our realities throughout your stay in Paramaribo. Let's share them, and together try to find solutions to problems that are common to us, and hence can only be solved if we work together.

The third condition is if by the end of the Seminar and then on, we elected individuals representing our people, abide to our responsibility to act in the interest of our people. The interest of our people is to be protected, for the future, from violence, crime, genocide, crimes against humanity and war. Joining the ICC is the first step in achieving this goal. As members of parliament we have the power to reach this goal.

The fourth one, is if on July 17, when Suriname celebrates in a non symbolic way the Tenth Anniversary of the Rome Statute, you back home are able to say to your family and friends:
"I have been in the 107th State Party of the Rome Statute."

Suriname was not in Rome in 1998, but in 2008 the Rome Statute will be in Suriname!
Thank you for being here to celebrate this achievement with us.