

**Speech by Baroness Vivien Stern at 6th Consultative Assembly of
Parliamentarians for the International Criminal Court (ICC) & the Rule of Law
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Distinguished delegates and friends old and new. It is an enormous privilege to be here in Uganda in the Parliament. I am from the House of Lords in the UK, that is the Upper House, the Senate. We are an unusual House of Parliament. We are not elected, we are appointed, and we have a big section of members – nearly 200 – who are independent. We independents have no political party and we are appointed because we have done something in our lives that has been useful to society. So when we get older we may be appointed.

I am in the House of Lords because of many years working on questions of crime and justice, the rule of law and human rights. So for me and many in the UK Parliament the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002, with so much support from so many countries and regions of the world, was indeed a great development. The UK Government has always been a great supporter of the Court and the new Government we have will, I know, continue that support.

I want to make just two points. First I want to welcome the principles that control the way the Court works. The Court is about crimes. The Court has severe punishments if there is a conviction, punishments it can use, but it does not have the death penalty. The world is moving very slowly, but moving towards the abolition of the death penalty. It is very important that the death penalty is not part of the Court if it is to send a message that killing is wrong and cruelty is wrong.

Uganda has adopted the Court statute in law and has accepted there is no death penalty as a punishment. This is to be much welcomed and I hope that when there are ICC prisons to hold convicted people they will be run according to all the United Nations standards in every respect, standards which apply to all prisons in all countries.

So the Court is a great encouragement to human rights and the rule of law more broadly. Firstly it applies the rule of law to crimes against humanity. That is right. International criminal justice should be a model of justice. Secondly the Court gives a high priority to helping victims and involving victims in its processes. There are many victims and sadly many of these victims are women and the violation they suffer is rape. As the Honourable Member for Sierra Leone said this morning, women are raped in broad daylight, a most horrible and unique crime.

Recently the UK Government asked me to carry out a study of how rape victims are treated by the state authorities in the UK. My review was published in March. I discovered that the victims of this terrible and most invasive crime had a very strong view of what justice meant to them. They wanted to be consulted, involved, given enough information to make a decision, respected, told the truth and given the help they need to rebuild their lives.

So I would like to end by emphasizing very strongly the importance of victims. The ICC has a very progressive approach to victims and witnesses. The ICC gives victims

a right they never had before – to participate in court proceedings by expressing their views through their own legal representatives.

The President of the Court told us that victims are now participating in two trials. In 2006 the ICC Pre-trial Chamber gave victims the right to participate in the investigation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and victims want participation. But victims also need reparation, practical support - relocation perhaps, understanding over a long period of time to enable them to recover, and since so many of the victims are women they need specialised help and support.

Justice is so much more than punishment for wicked deeds. Justice is also about recognition, reparation and long term support for victims of those wicked deeds. The ICC recognises this but there is much more to do, as the President of the Court admitted.

As a Member of Parliamentarians for Global Action I shall continue to support the broad development of the ICC, press the UK Government to do the same and particularly encourage our Government to ensure victims involvement, reparation and support are a high priority.

I would like to thank the PGA organizers for their fantastic work in getting this event together and I shall certainly go back to the UK and put a lot of energy into pushing what comes out of this meeting.