

Dear Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

It has been nearly 30 years since the genocide in Rwanda took place. Yet the search for justice, and reconciliation, continues.

The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals – housed here in The Hague and in Arusha – is still handling cases from the time of the Rwanda Tribunal.

We will never be able to rid ourselves of the memories of the horrific events in 1994. Luckily, they have been a source of inspiration for many to do good. So that we never forget what happened then, and to prevent such atrocities from occurring again.

See the creation of the International Criminal Court by national governments in 1998. Or the hundreds of NGOs around the world who are active in the fight against impunity. Seeking to promote accountability for past atrocities in places emerging from a violent past. I am proud that many of them are based here in The Hague.

The actions of individual citizens to help survivors and perpetrators of the genocide should also be recognized. To this day I am still in awe of the Portraits of Reconciliation project by photographer Pieter Hugo. In 2014 he travelled to southern Rwanda and captured a series of incredible images of perpetrators' requests for forgiveness being granted by the survivors. Images that give hope.

With the current war in Ukraine we are unfortunately once again witness to large scale crimes against humanity. Legal experts are already calling for the creation of a new special tribunal to bring war criminals to justice.

So far, the international community is moving quicker than it did in the early 90's. Doing everything it can to provide humanitarian and legal aid to Ukraine.

Let's make sure we continue to show this solidarity. But please, let us not forget the victims of the 1994 genocide, and all those other horrible conflicts around the world while doing so. So that they too will see justice served. And so that we continue to be reminded, that we must cherish the freedoms we enjoy here in The Hague.

Thank you.