



Statement

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PRESIDENT

Arusha, 1 July 2015

Remarks of President Theodor Meron

**Cornerstone Ceremony
Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals
Arusha Branch
1 July 2015
Arusha**

Your Excellency, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania,

Honourable Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues and Fellow Judges,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a tremendous pleasure to welcome all of you here as we commemorate the laying of the cornerstone for the new headquarters of the Arusha branch of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals.

It is a particular honour to have you with us here today, Your Excellency, President of the United Republic of Tanzania. Tanzania, our Host Country, has been an invaluable source of assistance for the Mechanism, especially with the construction of our soon-to-be home here in Arusha, for which we are deeply grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge in particular my dear friend, Mr. Stephen Mathias, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the representative of the United Nations Secretary-General here today.

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In commemorating the placement of the cornerstone today, we are, in a way, laying more than just one stone—we are giving definitive shape to the whole edifice that is to come. I wish to take this opportunity to salute—and offer my sincere gratitude to—all of those who have worked tirelessly to bring us to the point of laying our cornerstone and helping to make our new building a reality.

In commemorating the laying of the cornerstone, however, we are marking more than simply a key stage in the construction of our new premises here on this remarkable piece of land generously donated by Tanzania.

Just as the creation of the Mechanism itself reflected a commitment by the international community to the rule of law and to ensuring that the closure of the ICTR and the ICTY would not allow impunity to reign once more, so too does the construction of this new building represent the investment of the international community in the vital mandate entrusted to us.

The cornerstone we commemorate today is a concrete, tangible symbol of this extraordinary investment and enduring trust—of a belief not simply in the Mechanism itself but in the fundamental importance of principled accountability, of justice, and of the rule of law more generally.

I am delighted that we have with us here today representatives of a number of Member States—States without whose support and assistance our work would not be possible.

Of course, today's cornerstone also represents an important milestone for the Mechanism as an institution.

Three years ago to this very day, the Mechanism opened its first branch here in Arusha. At the time, we had few staff, no building of our own, and an extraordinary array of new responsibilities. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of the Mechanism's core team, my fellow Principals, and the close and invaluable collaboration of colleagues at the ICTR and the ICTY, however, the transition of a number of core functions from the ICTR to the Mechanism was seamless.

In the three short years that followed the launch of the Arusha branch, the Mechanism has rendered its first appeal judgement and scores of other judicial orders and decisions. Key arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the Mechanism is ready when the remaining fugitives expected to be tried by the Mechanism are arrested. And a wide variety of practice directions, guidelines, and other policies have been promulgated.

During this same time, the Mechanism has also marked key milestones, including in the development of its autonomous administrative support structure. And all the while, the Mechanism has continued to strive to abide

by the Security Council's direction that it remain small and efficient while carrying out its core essential functions, including by actively providing essential support and protection services for vulnerable victims and witnesses and supervising the enforcement of convicted persons' sentences across two continents.

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Today's ceremony marks yet another milestone for the Mechanism, as we take a key step in the establishment of the building that will serve as the new headquarters for our Arusha branch: a building that will host, among other things, the extraordinary archives entrusted to our care, a building that will offer a base from which the Mechanism may continue to engage in productive and cooperative exchanges with judges and jurists, academics and activists—welcoming visitors from Tanzania, from Rwanda, and from around the world.

Indeed, today's cornerstone is something of a stepping stone to our future, as the Mechanism continues to come into its own as an independent, pioneering institution that builds on the exceptional expertise and experience—the lesson and the legacies—of the ICTR and the ICTY and seeks to serve in all that it does as a model of best practices in international justice.

Once again, I am delighted to welcome all of you here today as we commemorate the laying of the cornerstone:

this milestone,

this stepping stone,

this eternal reminder of the horrific events of 1994 and the creation of the ICTR,

this emblem of enduring commitment to accountability and justice.

Thank you very much.

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The Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1966 (2010) to complete the remaining work of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia after the completion of their respective mandates. The MICT has two branches, one in Arusha, Tanzania, and one in The Hague, Netherlands.