

**PRESS CONFERENCE & PUBLIC SEMINAR ON
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT:
CONTRIBUTIONS INDIA CAN MAKE**

9 December 2005, New Delhi

REPORT

A press conference and public seminar was organized on the topic 'International Criminal Court: Contributions India Can Make'. The speakers at this press conference were Judge Philippe Kirsch (Presiding Judge of the ICC), Dr. Usha Ramanathan (law researcher & advisor, ICC-India) and Vahida Nainar (Chair, Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice & Advisor, ICC-India). The event was organized by the ICC-India campaign in collaboration with Amnesty International – India, CISRS, Indian Association of Lawyers, Indian Social Institute, Justice & Peace Commission, The Other Media, Partners for Law in Development and PWESCR. The event had about 35 participants, including media persons, lawyers, representatives of non-governmental organizations, human rights activists, academics and students.

The objectives of the event were a) to evoke interest in the ICC, especially among members of the print and electronic media; b) To build the capacities of participants to accurately understand the ICC & its implications for India, dispel myths & apprehensions. This event bears significance as it is the first press conference organized and conducted by the ICC-India campaign.

The main speaker for the event was Judge Philippe Kirsch, president and presiding judge of the ICC, situated in The Hague, The Netherlands. Judge Philippe Kirsch addressed the media on the ICC, emphasizing that his visit was intended at seeking India as a partner, and not to say that the ICC could deal with an Indian issue. President Kirsch spoke about the need for the International Criminal Court, the features of the Court which makes it well-suited to meet that need, the challenges that the Court faces in carrying out its mandate, the present situations that the court is studying and what will be required for the ICC to succeed. His speech was followed by questions and answers on issues including the location of the ICC, whether it would respect the principle of sovereignty, the status of the ICC under international law, special provisions for rights of accused, victims, women and children and the geographic representation in the ICC.

Subsequently, Ms. Vahida Nainar, Chair of Women's Initiative for Gender Justice and an expert on gender, conflict and international law, outlined the efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the statute creating the ICC, the significance of ICC in providing justice for grave violations of women's rights, and the significance of the standards on human rights that the ICC statute has set. She observed that while there was overwhelming support to the ICC from most regions of the world, the main opposition to it came from the United States. In addition, reluctance to accepting the ICC treaty comes from the Asian countries, she said. "While some of India's concerns about the ICC may be genuine, these cannot be addressed as a non-state party. Ratifying the ICC will enable India to contribute to development of international law and strengthen its own national

laws to deal with grave crimes committed in its own territory”, she observed. Dr. Usha Ramanathan, a law researcher, spoke about the reasons for India’s abstention on the ICC Statute in Rome, its misguided fears with regard to the ICC, and the potential that lies with India to contribute to this important international judicial institution. She emphasized the need for a universal vision by the present Indian establishment, instead of an ethnocentric one, where it is recognized and acted upon that peace anywhere requires justice everywhere.

The speakers responded to questions on implications of ICC on state sovereignty, India’s concern about the ICC, the updates on the ICC, who can bring a case, jurisdiction of the court, victims’ rights and issues of reparations. Most of the questions and comments were in the nature of an attempt to clarify and understand ICC’s importance as a new judicial institution in the world and its relevance to India.

The event resulted in raising awareness on ICC and its relevance to India, increased visibility to the issue through press & media coverage, increased outreach among media persons (print & electronic) and a strengthening of partnerships with other interested organizations through collaborations in organizing the event. The event received press coverage in newspapers including The Indian Express, The Hindu, The Times of India, Hindustan Times, The Telegraph and The Statesman.

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