

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, 27 June 2005

War Crimes Prosecutors Meet in Freetown

The Second Prosecutor's Colloquium, hosted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, provided a venue for all the Prosecutor's to meet and discuss the challenges facing the international criminal tribunals, as well as share success stories and best practices. The Special Court's Prosecutor, David Crane, was joined by Luis Moreno Ocampo, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court; Hassan Bubacar Jallow, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; and David Tolbert, Deputy Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The Prosecutors represented the world's four major criminal tribunals working to end impunity for the most serious crimes that plague humankind, and to contribute to peace and the prevention of future crimes. The tribunals have been entrusted with the responsibility of bringing to justice individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The colloquium discussions determined that international justice is at a crossroads. To succeed in fulfilling the mandates and deliver justice effectively and efficiently, the tribunals are greatly reliant upon the cooperation of national states.

The commitment of national states and the international community will be measured by their willingness to deliver indictees for trial, even if politically difficult. International criminal justice must apply to indicted fugitives such as Charles Taylor, Radovan Karadzic, and Ratko Mladic. To permit individuals accused of the gravest of crimes to evade justice would reinforce the culture of impunity that fuels conflict and atrocities.

Furthermore, investigations of the tribunals cannot be completed without open access to all areas and documents under investigation. Investigating teams cannot complete their missions unless granted permission to move freely and securely within the state /area of investigation and with the cooperation and support of the nation state.

Fundamentally, the tribunals cannot succeed without the firm commitment of sovereign states to discharge their legal and treaty obligations. Treaties such as the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and other international agreements and conventions need to be complied with. State cooperation with the international criminal tribunals is one of the pillars upon which the future development of international law depends.

The Prosecutors stated: "These tribunals have made great progress and set new precedent in international law. Violators of international criminal law including heads of state or government have been indicted and brought to justice. Others are awaiting trial. All this underlining the fundamental principle that in the rule of law no one is above the law.

Nevertheless, many continue to suffer from these crimes throughout the world, we affirm that only a sustained commitment to accountability will deter these atrocities. We call upon all national and international authorities to strengthen their dedication to justice.

“We believe that the people of the world are entitled to a system that will deter grave international crimes and hold to account those who bear the greatest responsibility. Only when a culture of accountability has replaced the culture of impunity can the diverse people of the world live and prosper together in peace.”

#END

Produced by the
Office of the Prosecutor
Special Court for Sierra Leone
Email: SCSL-Prosecutor-Press@un.org

Visit the Special Court's website at www.sc-sl.org