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International
Criminal Tribunal
for the former
Yugoslavia

Tribunal Pénal
International pour
l'ex-Yougoslavie

Diplomatic Briefing

The Hague, 24 January 2008

Serge Brammertz, Prosecutor of the ICTY

Excellences,

Mesdames et messieurs,

Tout d'abord, je tiens à vous remercier de votre présence à ce premier séminaire diplomatique de 2008. C'est une excellente opportunité pour moi de dialoguer avec vous et de poursuivre une coopération qui, je l'espère, sera fructueuse.

Monsieur le Président, je vous remercie très cordialement pour ces mots d'encouragement. Permettez-moi de saisir cette occasion pour vous féliciter pour vos réalisations à la tête de cette institution, pionnière dans le domaine de la justice pénale internationale. Tout en respectant l'indépendance de chaque organe du Tribunal, je me réjouis de travailler avec vous et de pouvoir bénéficier de votre longue expérience.

Monsieur le Greffier, je vous remercie pour votre généreux soutien durant ces premiers jours de mon mandat.

Je souhaite également remercier tous les collègues du parquet qui m'ont chaleureusement accueilli.

C'est un grand honneur pour moi d'avoir été nommé procureur de ce Tribunal international. J'étais au début de ma carrière de magistrat lorsque le conflit en ex-Yougoslavie a éclaté et lorsque par la suite le Tribunal a été créé. Depuis lors, j'ai suivi avec grand intérêt les travaux du Tribunal dont l'objectif a toujours été de

rendre justice aux victimes des crimes commis. Comme Procureur fédéral de Belgique ou comme Procureur-adjoint à la Cour Pénale Internationale ou encore comme président de la Commission internationale d'enquête des Nations Unies à Beyrouth, j'ai pu rencontrer à de nombreuses reprises des collaborateurs de ce tribunal, reconnus comme experts en droit pénal international et humanitaire. Je le considère dès lors comme un privilège de pouvoir travailler avec ce groupe de personnes exceptionnelles afin de mener à bien la mission qui nous a été confiée par la communauté internationale.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since I arrived some three weeks ago, my main focus has been on familiarising myself with the activities of the Office of the Prosecutor. I have met with all of our staff: trial attorneys, appeals counsel, investigators, analysts, researchers, trial support staff, administrative assistants, interns, all in one way or another very engaged in the preparation and conduct of our cases and crucial for the successful fulfilment of our mandate. I was also introduced to staff in the Registry, whose support is critical for this Office, and had fruitful discussions with the President and the Registrar.

I am very impressed by the many achievements of this institution and by our staff members' dedication and commitment. I thank the previous prosecutors and deputy prosecutors for allowing me to inherit a fully operational office with a competent and committed team. Mr. David Tolbert, the Deputy Prosecutor has accepted a new assignment with the United Nations and left the Tribunal. I will shortly be appointing a new Deputy Prosecutor to assist me in the daily management of the Office.

We have a number of priorities. In a public statement issued last week, I have underlined the importance of continuity in the work of the Office of the Prosecutor. This is why the main focus will be to ensure the successful conduct of all current and pending criminal proceedings. With 26 individuals on trial and 11 awaiting trial – it is a very busy period.

The arrest of the four remaining fugitives, Ratko Mladić, Radovan Karadžić, Goran Hadžić and Stojan Župljanin, remains an absolute priority for us. This Tribunal should not close its doors without having tried them. The Office of the Prosecutor will continue to rely on the crucial support and assistance of States, and in particular those from the former Yugoslavia to bring these fugitives to justice.

In these three weeks, I have discussed issues related to cooperation with several ambassadors including those from the former Yugoslavia. I have also met with the Foreign Minister of Slovenia, which currently holds the EU presidency, the NATO Secretary-General, the EU's High Representative and Secretary-General and its Commissioner for Enlargement and a number of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

During these meetings, I have been often asked whether I will provide a new assessment of Serbia's cooperation with the Tribunal and whether I was planning to go to the region soon. I intend to travel to Belgrade, as well as Zagreb and Sarajevo, in the course of next month to discuss these and other issues with national authorities. I will not make a new assessment on cooperation for the time being unless there are significant new developments that would warrant a new assessment. Until then, the assessment provided by the previous Prosecutor to the United Nations Security Council at the end of last year, applies. .

During my mandate, I will also continue to focus on our cooperation with local war crimes prosecutors and judicial authorities. We will continue transferring remaining

investigation files and sharing accumulated information and expertise. Transition to national systems is becoming increasingly important as we near the end of our mandate. It is crucial that we all continue to provide the necessary support to the local judiciaries so that they can successfully pursue the prosecution of war crimes suspects in their respective countries.

Finally, I believe that we will only succeed in our mission if we can encourage our staff to remain motivated and stay with us over the next few years to ensure a smooth handling of the cases. The loss of institutional knowledge and the difficulty in hiring experienced staff to complete remaining trials will invariably result in delays in completing the Tribunal's work. Together with the President and the Registrar, I will support ways to retain qualified and competent staff.

I am grateful for the support of United Nations member states and their approval of the ICTY budget for 2008 and 2009. In that budget, the Office of the Prosecutor has made efforts to reduce its resources towards the end of next year, in accordance with the currently anticipated progress of trials and appeals. We will need to continue to rely and call on your support to ensure that we have the necessary resources. The Tribunal's successful implementation of its Completion Strategy fully depends on it.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very motivated by the challenges ahead. I intend to provide the leadership and direction to successfully fulfil our mandate.

Let me once again thank you for your presence here today. I look forward to collaborating closely with you and your respective governments in the years to come.

Thank you.