

CICC Team on Communications

Statement at Hague Working Group Roundtable on ICC Communications Strategy

15 May 2014

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the CICC Team on communications, which has for many years monitored and supported the ICC's communications strategies and activities.

Importance of outreach and public information

The ASP and states parties have attached great importance to the Court's public information and outreach activities.

These have strong mandates in ICC legal documents, and are critical to the successful implementation of a range of Court policies, strategies and operations.

Judges have also highlighted outreach as crucial to enabling victims to participate in the trial phase and the reparations phase of Court proceedings.

Meanwhile, lessons learned—including from the ad hoc tribunals—clearly demonstrate that early, Court-led communication is essential for the meaningful delivery of fair and credible justice as set out in the Rome Statute.

These activities ensure justice is visible and maintain an open dialogue with those most affected by its judicial processes

The benefits brought by this engagement to the Court's overall cost-effectiveness, efficiency and fair and independent functioning, as well as to the broader objectives of the Rome Statute, cannot be underestimated.

The new OTP strategic plan (2012-15) also recognizes communications as a means of ensuring "understanding and cooperation from all stakeholders, partners and the communities the OTP serves," as well as in reinforcing deterrence, improving the effectiveness of preliminary examinations and promoting complementarity.

Impact in situation countries

The ICC has achieved substantial progress in its communications activities over the past years.

NGOs have been working from day one with the Court to maximize the impact of its messaging in situation countries, reinforcing its impact by going to areas that Court staff cannot due to logistical and security reasons.

Civil society continues to play an active role in the development and implementation of the Court's communication strategies, most recently assisting with ascertaining lessons learned to update the 2006 Strategic Plan on Outreach.

Need for Court to clearly outline necessary resources

This said, the continuing overstretch in the limited resources available for the Publication Information and Documentation Section (PIDS) has hampered its ability to achieve maximum impact.

There is an ever-increasing disconnect between the recognized importance of, as well as the need to improve, Court outreach and public information activities and the need for early outreach from the outset of the Court's involvement, including during the preliminary examination stage and the financial reality.

At present, neither the Registry nor the OTP have sufficient resources to communicate in preliminary examinations or when a new situation is opened.

PIDS continues to be forced to focus primarily on cases at trial phase, while rotating resources from situation to situation.

Because of this, crucial opportunities to reinforce the positive impact of the Court and counter misinformation have been lost in situations such as Kenya, Mali and Cote D'Ivoire.

While resources need to be continued to be used as efficiently as possible, states should encourage the Court to outline the resources it needs to achieve maximum impact in the framework of clearly elaborated strategies.

Need for a comprehensive Courtwide strategic approach

There is increasing recognition that communications is a matter of concern for the Court as a whole.

At the ICC-NGO roundtable meetings last year, Court principals indicated they had taken on board civil society's concerns that the Court needed to adopt a more proactive, timely, engaged, court-wide and coordinated strategic approach to communications.

We have since seen tangible improvements in the Court's communications, for example through internal working groups or daily video summaries of proceedings in the Kenya situation – useful for a wide variety of audiences.

These lessons-learned and new strategic approaches must continue to be developed and codified in updated strategies, including the Strategic Plan on Outreach, the Public Information Strategy and Integrated Strategy for Outreach, Public Information and External Relations.

The Team underscores the importance of maintaining an overarching communications strategy, since that is where lessons learned can be pooled and outreach made more effective and efficient overall.

All strategies should pay specific attention to targeting vulnerable groups such as women, children and minorities.

Real attention is also needed for court-wide completion strategies as Court activities lessen in a given situation.

Harnessing online communications

Civil society has also been providing input to the redevelopment of the ICC website.

In this digital age, where web access via mobile phones is increasing exponentially—particularly in some of the countries where the Court is working—online tools are one of the most powerful and cost effective means of reaching both local and global audiences.

The Court should be encouraged to develop a comprehensive online strategy—detailing of the necessary financial and human resources—which aims achieve the Court's wider organizational strategic goals.

Role of states

Court-led outreach in situation countries is essential for the meaningful delivery of fair and credible justice, as there are certain messages and activities that can only be delivered by the ICC itself—not by states, or NGOs for that matter

In countries where accused persons are powerful political actors with resources greatly outweighing the Court's, this direct connection becomes ever more important.

Where states can have a greater impact is by complementing the work of the Court by convening seminars or other public fora to increase awareness of the ICC's mandate, activities, and jurisprudence in countries around the world where it does not have a presence.

States should also take greater steps to mainstream expressions of support for the ICC, universality and complementarity, the rights and needs of victims, and gender justice, in a wide range of state resolutions and statements.

Time to set the agenda

As a new institution, the communication of basic information has been the necessary key element of the Court's first years.

While this need is still very much a reality, the political context in which the Court is operating has become ever-more prominent as its judicial processes have begun to have an impact.

The Re-vision project and the scheduled updating of strategies offer an invaluable opportunity for the Court to take stock and define its communication priorities for the next phase of its existence.

The Team believes, while recognizing that the Court is not a political actor, that this new phase should be defined by a courtwide strategic effort to set the agenda on international justice.

This might involve putting in place management structures that empower PIDS and others to develop and engage in proactive messaging, or the strategic use digital tools that can deliver messages of relevance to both audiences in situation countries and the wider world.

Civil society stands ready to assist at every turn.

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