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Court**

Judge Sang-Hyun Song

President of the International Criminal Court

Keynote Lunch Address

2013 Special Olympics Global Development Summit

Pyeongchang, South Korea

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Your Excellency, Prime Minister Kim,
Your Excellency, President Joyce Banda,
Honourable Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,
Honourable Chairperson of the Organising Committee, Mrs. Na,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Athletes,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am greatly honoured to have been asked to participate in the Special Olympics Global Development Summit, and to have this opportunity to speak to you today.

From its earliest origins, the Olympic tradition has been about supreme human performance. Some have seen it as pursuing an ideal of physical perfection.

But the modern Olympic movement, to its enormous credit, has also embraced disability. In Sydney, Beijing and London we have seen the Paralympics grow progressively into events with a genuinely global reach and enormous public interest and support. They have helped change public attitudes in many of our societies, encouraging much greater inclusion, understanding and respect for those of us who live with disability.

However this change of attitudes has been largely focussed on physical disability. Intellectual impairment remains much harder for people unaffected by it to understand, let alone face up to and deal with. Moreover at the level of communities and governments the issues involved can be even more complex and challenging than those relating to physical disability.

This is why the Special Olympics are so special; and also why it is important that so many of you have come here this week to contribute to the Global Development Summit. I would like to thank the organisers very warmly for giving us this opportunity to reflect together on what we can do to protect and advance the interests of those with intellectual impairment.

There are many challenges in this area, and many people here who are far better qualified than I am to offer advice on what should be done and how best to do it. For my own part I would like to touch on just two aspects, drawn from my personal and professional experience.

As President of UNICEF Korea, I know how important it is for us to do all we can to give children the best possible start in life, not just in our own societies, but all over the world. Of course many other factors will come into play, but we know that what happens in those early

years in terms of nutrition, health and education will have a fundamental influence on each individual's capacity for personal development and fulfilment for the rest of their lives.

In the same way, I believe that there needs to be a special focus on the childhood years of those who suffer intellectual impairment. Attention to their needs, understanding of their potential and working with them to maximise their capacity to realise it can make a huge difference to their later lives. Conversely, failure to address these issues is likely to constrain their development and damage their potential quality of life.

The voluntary sector can play an important part in this, as it does in so many other areas. But the main role in promoting these objectives has to lie with governments and communities.

You will not be surprised if I say that from my experience as a lawyer, good intentions are not enough – if we want to protect and indeed to advance the interests of vulnerable members of our societies, we need some rules-based systems. I also believe that sometimes it is helpful at the national level if international standards are set to guide the implementation of policies.

The International Criminal Court, of which I am honoured to be a judge and President, is part of such a system. It was established in 2002 to help put an end to genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression – offences that have caused enormous suffering throughout human history.

The ICC derives its authority from an international treaty called the Rome Statute, which defines the crimes I have just mentioned and – crucially – gives the primary responsibility to its States Parties to prosecute them. The ICC only takes over if they are unable or unwilling to do so.

121 countries have joined the Rome Statute so far. The ICC is currently investigating or prosecuting atrocities committed in 8 country situations. Last year the Court handed down its first conviction in a landmark case concerning the use of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The ICC is still in its early, formative years. More states need to join if its jurisdiction is to become truly universal. But it is already starting to influence behaviour as potential perpetrators think twice about the risk of prosecution. “We’ll see you in the Hague” is no longer just a friendly tourist invitation.

The issues under discussion at this Summit may seem far removed from the world of genocide and war crimes. But as the World Bank's 2011 Development Report demonstrated, the effect of armed conflicts on development can be devastating. For example, the report concluded that the average cost of a civil war was equivalent to more than 30 years of GDP growth for a medium-sized developing economy, and that trade levels after major episodes of violence could take 20 years to recover.

Deterring mass violence of this kind, not least against civilian populations, is one of the key long-term objectives of the ICC. In a similar way, investment in promoting stability and the rule of law as a key element in economic and social development is an investment in the wellbeing of all us, and particularly of the most vulnerable members of society.

But law in a treaty or on the statute book is not enough. Words must be turned into action through willpower and commitment.

An excellent example of an international treaty which provides clear guidance to nations is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006. With 127 States Parties so far, it has been a catalyst in changing perceptions of people with disabilities from objects of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing them as full and equal members of society.

The Convention makes clear that persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. The Convention's provisions make no other distinction between physical and intellectual disability - it provides for a single set of rights and obligations for all concerned.

The challenge now is to make a reality in all our societies of provisions such as these. Law can not only protect the rights and interests of the disabled – it can positively advance them.

Let us all work together to make this happen.

Thank you.