

ICC23

CLOSING ADDRESS BY INCOMING CHAIR, MS ROSSLYN NOONAN

25 March 2010

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

<i>E nga mana</i>	Distinguished People
<i>E nga rangatira</i>	Leaders
<i>E nga hau e wha</i>	People from the four winds
<i>Tena koutou katoa</i>	Greetings

<i>Hutia te rito</i>	If we pluck out the heart from the flax bush
<i>Hutia te rito o te harakēke</i>	Where will the bellbird sing?
<i>Kei hea te komako e kō?</i>	
<i>Ki mai ki ahau</i>	And if I ask you
	What is the most important thing?
<i>He ana te mea nui</i>	What is the most important thing in the world?
<i>He ana te mea nui o te ao?</i>	It is people, it is people
<i>Māku e ki atu</i>	It is people!
<i>He Tangata, he Tangata</i>	
<i>He Tangata – hi!</i>	

Madam, Ms Jennifer Lynch

Madam Secretary, Ms Florence Simbiri-Jaoko

Representatives of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Distinguished members of the diplomatic corps

Distinguished guests and observers

Fellow members of the Association of the International Coordinating
Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of
Human Rights

and Regional Coordinating Committees

Colleagues and friends

Warmest greetings

I greeted you, truly people from the four winds, in Māori, the first language of
New Zealand.

The ancient proverb is but one of many that speaks of human rights values at the
heart of a community long, long before our parents and grandparents came
together in the aftermath of the horrors of World War II to proclaim the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights.

We are here today as the result of the extraordinary commitments and courage
of many who have gone before us down through the ages – men and women
determined to secure for themselves, for their children and their people, freedom
from fear and hunger; determined to build societies where justice, security and
fairness prevails; and where opportunity and diversity can truly flourish.

In our lifetime we have witnessed the emergence and development of national
human rights institutions as the essential “bridge between the international and
domestic human rights protections”¹. Our role is to help make the fine provisions
of the international human rights treaties, a reality for everyone who lives within
the shores, the borders of our homelands.

Those of us entrusted with the leadership of these still evolving institutions know that we carry great responsibilities; that we face huge expectations and challenges at home and internationally.

During my term as New Zealand Chief Human Rights Commissioner, the Commission and I have benefited enormously from being part of a community of national human rights institutions who come together regionally, thanks to the Asia-Pacific Forum, and internationally through the ICC and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have learnt so much about what living up to the “Paris Principles” can really mean; about how to be more effective, about what constitutes good practice. We have shared experiences and expertise. Participating in debates and discussions about making human rights and responsibilities a reality has been immensely enriching. Being part of this community has challenged us to do better. And, for me personally, the examples of courage and commitment of fellow Commissioners across the Asia-Pacific and around the world, while making me feel very humble, have energised and inspired me.

May I take this opportunity to acknowledge two special friends: Dr Sima Simar of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, who faces danger daily, and Leila de Lima of the Philippines Commission, who has been threatened because of her courageous response to extra-judicial killings and other serious human rights violations.

Over the last three years, Jennifer Lynch, with the unstinting support of David Langtry and the staff of the Canadian Commission, and supported by Professor Ahn, former ICC Secretary, lifted the ICC to a new level of professionalism, effectiveness and impact.

Throughout, Ms Lynch and the ICC Bureau have benefitted from the crucial partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the astute and generous advice and guidance of Gianni Magazzeni and his team in the National Institutions Unit.

As a result of that strengthening of the ICC, this week we have witnessed the extension of the ICC-OHCHR partnership to the UNDP. That extended partnership is a key step in ensuring recognition and support for national human rights institutions throughout the United Nations.

I want also to pay special tribute to, and express my thanks to, the Commissioners and staff of the national institutions of the Asia-Pacific, and to the wonderful Director and staff of the Asia-Pacific Forum Secretariat.

I could, of course, not have accepted this position without the willingness of Commissioners and staff of the New Zealand Commission to support me knowing that it will mean more work for them.

Finally, it has been most heartening to have the expressed support of the New Zealand Minister of Justice, for which I am most appreciative.

This week we have debated and agreed strategic priorities for the three years ahead. Thanks to all the work that has been done over the past three years we can view the period ahead as one of consolidation. I am committed to doing whatever I can to support our unique accreditation processes; to strengthening our regional networks; and to ensuring the ICC provides the most effective ways possible for us to support each other, to exchange our experiences and best practices. Most immediately, that involves working with the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Office of the High Commissioner, and through our regional chairpeople, with all member institutions, to make our global conference in October a success.

In working together to achieve those priorities, we are strengthening the ability of our institutions to make a difference to the lives of people at home, in our regions and throughout the world.

And with these words I declare this 23rd meeting of the ICC closed.

Travel well. Go safety.

Kia hora te marino, kia whakapapa pounamu te moana,
kia tere te kārohirohi i mua i tō huarahi.

*May peace be widespread, may the sea glisten like greenstone,
and may the shimmer of light guide you on your way.*