



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE
KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

666 Third Avenue, 19th floor
New York, NY 10017
Tel. (212)-519-9500
Fax. (212)-370-1954
www.netherlandsmission.org

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STATEMENT BY

H.E. Dr. Uri Rosenthal

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law

NEW YORK, 24 September 2012

Mr. President, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Dutch legal scholar Hugo Grotius was far ahead of his time. In 1625 he wrote: 'there is a common law among nations which is valid alike for war and in war', thereby laying the foundations of modern international law.

I do not quote this historical figure without reason. The Netherlands has contributed to international law for centuries. In 1899 and 1907, the Hague peace conferences were held, and not long afterwards the Peace Palace opened its doors. International law is practised in the Netherlands to this very day, in the Peace Palace and in other international courts and tribunals.

Promoting international law is dear to our hearts. As an open society and an open economy, the Netherlands depends on a strong international order. We therefore need the rule of law. At national and international level.

Challenging impunity is a vital part of promoting the rule of law. It is important for perpetrators of crimes against humanity to be held to account, regardless of their position. The recent sentencing of former head of state Charles Taylor by the Special Court for Sierra Leone shows that the international community has made great progress in this area.

It is preferable to prosecute perpetrators in the country itself where the crimes were committed. But if a state is unable or unwilling to do so, duty falls on the international community. We therefore firmly support the International Criminal Court, and call upon states to ratify the Statute of Rome. The Netherlands also supports effective investigation and prosecution of international crimes at national level. Together with Belgium and Slovenia, we will therefore launch an initiative for a new international instrument on mutual legal assistance and extradition.

The Netherlands is firmly committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes. This morning we hosted a side event on this topic. With the President of the International Court of Justice and the Secretary-General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration we discussed future challenges.

In the future, the International Court of Justice needs to be strengthened through the universal acceptance of compulsory jurisdiction. So I support the campaign launched by the UN Secretary-General in his Rule of Law report.

We are also promoting the rule of law at home, by establishing a new Institute for Human Rights to further promote the cause of the rule of law.

In the Netherlands we understand the importance of the rule of law. Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali was the first to call The Hague 'the legal capital of the world'.

In August next year, the Peace Palace in The Hague will celebrate its centennial. To mark this milestone, the Netherlands will organise a session to promote and advance the peaceful settlement of disputes. Thus showing the world that we still play a leading role in promoting international law. Just as we did when Hugo Grotius wrote his famous work *On the Law of War and Peace*.

Thank you.