Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary marks 10th Anniversary of the International Criminal Court

2012-07-09

He will announce a £500,000 UK voluntary donation to the International Criminal Court Trust Fund for Victims, that supports medical care and assistance for the victims of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity, and will pledge UK support for the Court's work and investigations.

He will call on all states to apprehend fugitives from international justice and those indicted by the International Criminal Court, including President Bashir, Joseph Kony and General Bosco.

He will call on the UN Security Council members to put aside their differences and back concerted diplomatic action to stop the crimes being committed by President Assad's state-sponsored killing machine in Syria.

And he will urge other nations to emulate Britain's new initiative on preventing sexual violence in conflict which will be the focus of a year-long G8 campaign in 2013.

He will say:

On the importance of international law in foreign policy

"The rule of law is critical to the preservation of the rights of individuals and the protection of the interests of all states".

"It is the common thread binding many of the pressing issues we face, from building peace, widening democracy, and expanding free trade, to confronting terrorism while upholding the law and respecting human rights.

"We have learnt from history that you cannot have lasting peace without justice, accountability and reconciliation".

"The Arab Spring has shattered the idea that nations can maintain long-term stability and prosperity without human rights, political participation and economic freedom for their citizens".

"And international laws and agreements are the only durable framework to address problems without borders, from protecting our oceans to tackling terrorism and cyber crime."

“That is why the UK attaches such importance to securing a Global Arms Trade Treaty this month that is robust and legally binding; that covers all types of conventional weapons including small arms, light weapons and all types of munitions, and that contains strong provisions on human rights, humanitarian law and sustainable development.”

On Syria and the need for international unity over the protection of human rights overseas:

“We can see the consequences of a divided international community very clearly in Syria”.

“Once again, the world is being called upon to stop a state-sponsored killing and torture machine, which has already claimed thousands of victims, and to end a vicious cycle of violence. So far our efforts have not succeeded.”

“In Syria we are seeking tough, concerted diplomatic intervention rather than a military response. For we believe that if the full weight of the Security Council were to be put behind Kofi Annan’s plan for a political transition and then was enforced by the international community, it would lead to an end to the violence and a political settlement on the ground. We will continue to try to work with Russia and China to achieve that, but if the Kofi Annan plan fails no option to protect lives would be off the table.”

On the International Criminal Court

“Our coalition Government is firmly of the view that leaders who are responsible for atrocities should be held to account, whether nationally or internationally. Institutions of international justice are not foreign policy tools to be switched on and off at will.”

“Their names are known - Bosco, Bashir and Kony among them - and they should stand trial for the charges against them. There should be no hiding place or sanctuary for people indicted for crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide. And states that are not party to the Rome Statute should consider the message they send to the outside world when they harbour or welcome indictees under the guise of regional solidarity”

On the global revolution in accountability

“There has been a global revolution in accountability. It is an unfinished revolution, but it is unprecedented in history.

“…even twenty years ago, impunity for war crimes was still the norm.”

“Since then we have built the architecture of international justice”.

“Some of those responsible for appalling crimes have been and are being prosecuted, including Charles Taylor and former members of the Khmer Rouge.”

“The presumption that leaders of nations are immune from prosecution has been eroded.”

“The idea of sovereignty as a barricade against international justice has been all but eradicated.”

“And the referrals of leaders in Libya and Sudan shows that not signing up to the Rome Statute cannot be relied upon as a way of avoiding being held to account.”

“The lesson of the last two decades is that if you commit war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide you will not be able to rest easily in your bed: the reach of international justice is long and patient, and once set in train, it is inexorable.”

“Equally, we have sent the message to victims of crimes that access to justice is their right: if their country cannot or will not take action to accord them justice, there is real hope for redress for the worst crimes.”

“These achievements are not the product of the history or values of just one part of the world - but of the whole world.”

“And none of it would have happened without the NGOs and non-governmental organisations that have driven the global human rights movement: documenting atrocities, rallying public opinion, running campaigns, urging governments to act and monitoring the implementation of commitments.”

On Britain’s record and new pledges for action

“there is no doubt where Britain stands: we are with those who say that international law is universal and that all nations are accountable to it, and we do not shy away from accountability to it ourselves.”

“We are a country that believes in and upholds the Responsibility to Protect, and that is prepared to act to save lives - including through military action as a last resort.”

“We went to great lengths to ensure that our intervention in Libya had the full authority and backing of a Chapter VII UN Security Council resolution, to minimise civilian casualties throughout our operations, and to work side by side with Arab nations.”

“But we can and will do more.”

“First, we pledge to recommit to the importance of fighting impunity for grave international crimes wherever they occur.”

“We will be a robust supporter of the International Criminal Court in its investigations. We will encourage states party to provide the necessary political, strategic, practical and financial support the Court needs. This includes urging voluntary contributions to the ICC’s groundbreaking mechanism to help victims rebuild their lives, the Trust Fund for Victims. We

donated £500,000 to the Trust Fund for Victims last year and I am pleased to announce that we will match that donation this year. We will also urge states outside the Rome Statute to consider acceding to the Treaty."

"Second, we will redouble our calls on all states to cooperate with the International Criminal Court and apprehend those it has indicted"

"Third, we will use our role in the European Union, NATO, and the United Nations Security Council to support more effective conflict prevention and the UN rule of law efforts"

"Fourth, we will work to build greater consensus with emerging powers on how to translate shared values on human rights into action. In Britain we have made these discussions an explicit component of the stronger bilateral ties we are seeking with a range of countries. We believe that this conversation needs to be widened. I particularly call on NGOs to take up this issue and help mobilise public opinion in emerging powers, since the greatest hope of influencing government policy lies through an alliance of global civil society and concerned citizens."

"And fifth and finally, we will use our international role and diplomatic network to pursue initiatives that support peace, security and human rights worldwide."

On Britain's new initiative on combating sexual violence in conflict

"We are setting up a new, dedicated team of experts in our Foreign and Commonwealth Office which will be devoted to investigating and preventing sexual violence in armed conflict. It will draw on the skills of doctors, lawyers, police, psychologists, social workers, gender advisers, forensic specialists and experts in the care and protection of victims and witnesses."

"It will be able to deploy overseas at short notice to gather evidence and testimony to support international and national investigations and prosecutions. It will be available to support UN and other international missions, and to provide training and mentoring to national authorities to help them develop the right laws and capabilities."

"We will use Britain's Presidency of the G8, starting on January 1st 2013, to run a year-long diplomatic campaign on the need for stronger international action. We want to encourage others to follow suit, and increase the resources they devote in this area. We want to shift the view that sexual violence is an unavoidable consequence of armed conflict, to ensure that rape and sexual slavery in conflict are not given a lesser priority in investigations and prosecutions than other offences, and to secure an increase in prosecutions."

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-marks-10th-anniversary-of-the-international-criminal-court