

In establishing a permanent criminal court, the international community would vigorously counter the unwillingness or incapacity of some states to prosecute international crimes, and would place them under the jurisdiction of an independent juridical body.

Canada welcomed the decision by the forty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly to mandate the International Law Commission to draft a statute for a permanent international criminal court. Through its diligent work over the last 10 years, the ILC has conscientiously built a base for consensus on the creation of a permanent court. We are now able to see more clearly how such a Court might be created, how it would be composed, its jurisdiction, the laws it would apply, and how international offences would be prosecuted. I hope the work of this historic meeting of experts will move us all closer to achievement of this consensus.

I have no illusions about how quickly we can put together an effective system of permanent, international legal controls. But the urgency of addressing ongoing atrocities in the former Yugoslavia has heightened international outrage. The creation of an ad hoc tribunal to try those responsible for atrocities in the former Yugoslavia may well hasten the international community to finally establish a permanent international criminal court.

We are now in an era where the relative stability of the two-power, ideological, cold-war environment has been replaced by the turbulence we see all around us. This period, marked by escalating violence and discord in many parts of the world, is also characterized by an increasing willingness on the part of the international community to seek multilateral solutions to the problems of an interdependent world.

Greater adherence to the international rule of law is an important element in managing that interdependence. The establishment of an international criminal court would promote greater respect for the law, and greater civility in dealings between nations and individuals. Most important, it would establish a fundamental moral vision of the future.