

Speaking notes for  
**Jennifer Lynch, Q.C.**

ICC Chairperson and  
Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission

**Closing Statement: ICC General Assembly Meeting**

23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions  
for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC)

Thursday, March 25, 2010  
Location TBA  
Geneva, Switzerland

Check Against Delivery

Good afternoon, everyone.

This is the last time that I will take the podium as your Chair.

Three years ago, I stood at this podium and addressed you as your Chair for the first time.

I had recently been appointed Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission and was completely unknown to ICC members. I am deeply grateful for the faith you placed in me at that time. I thank all of you.

On that day, I made three commitments:

(1) The first commitment was to strengthen the foundation of the ICC by improving the accreditation process. To meet this commitment, I launched a review of the practices of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation, or SCA.

The review led the SCA to develop and implement new guidelines on accreditation; these guidelines have resulted in a more rigorous, transparent and independent accreditation process. The guidelines include General Observations that clarify a wide range of issues related to the operations of accredited NHRI's.

The new accreditation process continues to help the ICC and accredited NHRIs grow in strength and impact:

- With help from every region, the ICC secured full standing for 'A status' NHRIs before the Human Rights Council in June 2007.
- Two years later, we achieved similar standing before the Organization of American States.
- We continue to advocate for similar recognition from the Commission on the Status of Women.

We can all take pride in our strengthened accreditation process and the credibility that it secures for us internationally.

(2) The second commitment I made three years ago was to foster a culture of cooperation among human rights institutions.

To meet this commitment, we first needed to clarify our structure and roles. I launched a comprehensive review of ICC governance, which led to our 2008 incorporation under Swiss law and our adoption of our new statute and bylaws:

- The new governance structure directly engages the ICC Bureau and Regional Chairs in all key decisions.
- The ICC annual general meeting enables members to consider and vote on Bureau recommendations and the Finance Committee Report.

Next, we needed to enhance our communication:

- As we were now regularly making statements before the Human Rights Council, we implemented a formal approval process for statements.
- We developed a process whereby regular reports and communications would be forwarded to membership from the Chair through the Regional Chairs and Secretariats.
- As Chair, I have attended your regional meetings to make reports and to hear any concerns.
- The Geneva representative prepares reports on the interaction of NHRIS and the ICC during sessions of the Human Rights Council and other major human rights events, reports regularly to the ICC Chairperson and Bureau, and informs individual NHRIs on relevant developments and opportunities to engage with international mechanisms.
- We expanded our website, and
- We have expanded our translation capacity. ICC23 marks the first time that ICC delegates can monitor the proceedings in four languages: English, French, Spanish and Arabic. Most ICC documents are also available in all four languages.

Evidence that these steps have increased the level of cooperation among members came earlier this week when we reached consensus on a new Strategic Plan. Members from all regions had provided input on the Plan during the past five months.

(3) The third commitment I made as incoming Chair was to help NHRIs and the ICC learn from one another — to generate opportunities to exchange ideas and best practices.

In my view, this remains a top priority for the ICC because it is central to our mission: to serve as an international association of NHRIs that promotes and strengthens member organizations in accordance with the Paris Principles and that provides leadership in the recognition, promotion and protection of human rights.

We have launched a number of initiatives to make this happen:

- We held workshops on Universal Periodic Review in all regions
- We look for opportunities to bring our members together. For example:
  - Last year, 39 NHRIs attended the Durban Review Conference, which included a side event that the ICC organized in cooperation with OHCHR, where NHRIs discussed best practices and challenges associated with monitoring racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and adopted a joint statement in which they set forth their commitments in implementing the anti-racism agenda.

- This month 11 NHRIs have attended the Commission on the Status of Women, where we held pre- and post- coordination meetings for those attending.
- We have launched our first two working groups, on Business and Human Rights and on the Durban Review
- We continue with our biannual international conferences in 2008 on the Administration of Justice in Nairobi, and this year on Business and Human Rights in Edinburgh
- As well, we have shifted the focus of our Annual Meeting back to thematic issues. This week, we discussed more than a dozen different issues.
- And under the leadership of your Regional Chairs, great progress has been made, with every region holding sessions for knowledge transfer.
- Human rights organizations also shared knowledge and expertise in a number of other ways, such as by engaging one another's employees as interns.

Much remains to be done, of course. I am confident that we have laid the solid foundation needed for further progress.

As I describe all of these activities and progress we have made, it fills me with wonder, humility, and gratitude.

*Wonder* because we have achieved so much in such a short time.

*Humility* because I was given a gift three years ago when I came to you as an unknown. Many of you had known each other for decades. You embraced me, and gave me the honour of serving as your Chair during this critical time for the ICC. It has been a privilege for me **as ICC Chair** to participate in this extraordinary work.

... *and Gratitude* for the tremendous contributions every one of you is making to the ICC.

I thank all members, particularly the Regional Chairs, and members of the ICC Bureau, sub-committees and working groups who provide extra service. I personally thank Professor Ahn, who served as my deputy chair and as the founding Secretary of the ICC.

I appreciate the support of the United Nations, from High Commissioners Arbour and Pillay, from National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section staff so brilliantly led by Gianni Magazenni and of course from Katharina Rose, our Geneva representative.

I also publicly thank staff at the Canadian Human Rights Commission for their extraordinary dedication, professionalism and tireless support.

In particular, I acknowledge Deputy Chief Commissioner David Langtry, who has been involved in all major initiatives related to accreditation, governance, finance and administration. David also chaired the Nairobi Conference when illness kept me away.

We are a true community of colleagues, and I shall always treasure the relationships we have established.

Thank you, *merci, gracias, shoukran gazilan.*

***Elections:***

These relationships will help inspire the ICC to make further progress under a new Chair.

***[Lead into Elections]***

*[end speech]*

