

United Methodist Church

Text of resolution passed by the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, May 2000:

- "D. Impunity: The Case for an International Criminal Court "You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor." (Leviticus 19:15)

A culture of peace must be globalized today. The prevailing culture of repression, oppression and exploitation has no place in this culture of peace. Only the pursuit of a just peace, which includes the search for truth and justice for victims, will bring about forgiveness, reconciliation and healing in many rural villages, towns, cities, nations and regions of the world that are scarred by conflict and war. The establishment of an International Criminal Court (ICC), as provided for in a treaty adopted in Rome in June 1998 by the United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, provides an important step in ending impunity. This court will hear cases against war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression. Faith-based and religious groups, working together with the Coalitions for an International Criminal Court (CICC), identified several moral and ethical imperatives and included these in a draft preamble they offered the Rome Conference to consider.

The draft stated: "Desirous that the quest for justice includes retributive justice whose purpose is the prosecution and punishment of offenders while insuring the rights of the accused to fair trials, restorative justice whose purpose is that of reparations, restitution and rehabilitation for the victims, and redemptive justice which must be seen as the enablement of communities to deal with the truths of the past in ways which will allow and enable social reconstruction and reconciliation, and the ending of cycles of violence; "Recognizing that adjudication of crimes of international concerns that have transcended national boundaries are often beyond the scope of national criminal justice systems, and that crimes whose immediate victims have occurred within national contexts are often beyond the competence or ability of national judicial systems; Noting the basic principles of justice for victims of crime and the abuse of power approved by the United Nations General Assembly; therefore, establish the International Criminal Court..."

As Pope John Paul II stated, "A positive sign of the growing will of the States to acknowledge their responsibility in the protection of the victims of [crimes against humanity], and their commitment to prevent them, is the recent initiative of the diplomatic Conference of the United Nations that distinctly adopted the Statute for an International Criminal Court that will assess the guilt and punish those responsible of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes."

United Methodists all over the world must urge all governments, especially the United States of America, to sign and ratify the treaty to establish the Court. The work of the CICC and the Washington Working Group on the International Criminal Court (which focuses on getting the US to ratify the treaty) must be supported. In their support, United Methodists must preserve and strengthen the unprecedented provisions of the Rome Statute calling for an end to impunity for crimes committed against women and children. Also, the ancestral and sacred sites of indigenous peoples must be included in the Court's definition of protected sites."