

# THE HAGUE INTERNATIONAL CITY OF PEACE AND JUSTICE

## FROM CONFLICT PREVENTION TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

About 160 international organisations in The Hague work to create a more just and peaceful world by resolving conflicts – not with armed force but with reasoned legal judgments. Some of these organisations prosecute and try war criminals. The Hague is a place where knowledge, research and experience in the field of peace and justice come together, and a birthplace of projects that foster peace. Organisations like the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) are all based here.

### International courts

The peaceful resolution – and where possible, the prevention – of conflicts is one of the tasks of international organisations located in The Hague. The International Court of Justice, the highest judicial organ of the United Nations, seeks peaceful resolutions for disputes between states. The Permanent Court of Arbitration also mediates in disputes between states and international organisations or private parties. These two courts' independent judges work on the basis of international law, thus resolving and often preventing conflicts in the courtroom. Both courts enjoy great worldwide prestige.

### War tribunals

The Netherlands plays a leading role in prosecuting war criminals and persons suspected of crimes against humanity. When defendants' own countries lack the ability or will to try them, courts

and tribunals like the ICC assume this responsibility. Since its establishment in 2002 the ICC has been investigating, prosecuting and trying individuals suspected of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Besides the ICC there are also special ad hoc tribunals such as the Yugoslavia tribunal (ICTY) founded in 1993, a temporary UN judicial organ that tries suspected war criminals from the former Yugoslavia. Both the ICC and ICTY are based in The Hague.

The cases that come before the ICC and ICTY attract considerable international media attention. Hundreds of journalists come to The Hague to report on proceedings against former rulers accused of war crimes, like former Congolese rebel leader Thomas Lubanga (indicted for the war crimes of enlisting and conscripting children and using them to participate actively in hostilities), Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor (indicted for crimes against humanity and war crimes) and Serbian former politician Radovan Karadžić (indicted for war crimes and genocide). Thanks to the excellent security and safety conditions offered by The Hague and The Netherlands, the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) was able to hold the trial against the Liberian Ex-president Charles Taylor in a courtroom at the ICC, in The Hague and at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) in Leidschendam. Lubanga and Taylor were found guilty in 2012; Karadžić's trial is still under way.

### The OPCW: for a world without chemical weapons

On 11 October 2013, the Nobel Committee announced that the Nobel Peace Prize

## WORKING TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD

The Hague is the international city of peace and justice. Here, every day, tens of thousands of people jointly pursue a more peaceful, just and secure world. They work in around 160 organisations, hundreds of companies and various knowledge centres. And also in the Peace Palace, the symbol of international justice for more than 100 years. The Hague is the place where conflicts are prevented and peacefully solved. It is, furthermore, the host city for international conferences and a meeting place for dialogue and debate. For everyone; both now and in the future.

#peacejustice

*“The Hague is recognised globally as the home of international justice.”*

- Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General



would be awarded to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This organisation established its headquarters in The Hague in 1992. The Committee praised the role played by the OPCW in reducing the number of chemical weapons all over the world. Thanks to the OPCW's work, no fewer than 65 states made a start on destroying their chemical weapons in 1997. OPCW inspectors are helping them to dispose of these weapons of mass destruction and are making sure that countries such as Syria keep to the agreements made.

### Knowledge institutions

With so many peace and justice-related activities being conducted, knowledge is vital. Knowledge institutions working in the field prefer to be at the hub of activities. The Asser Institute, the Hague Academic Coalition, The Hague Institute for Global Justice and many other organisations make The Hague a centre of expertise on peace and justice and see to it that this expertise is shared. For this reason international organisations and knowledge institutions are increasingly choosing to locate in the city.

These organisations share their research, knowledge and experience in the field of peace and justice with one another, other institutions and countries around the world. Politicians, diplomats, public servants and researchers come to The Hague to exchange knowledge. The city also hosts peace conferences at which political leaders discuss ways to resolve conflicts between their countries, enshrining their agreements in peace treaties.

The Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) draws up conventions that facilitate life for today's global citizens, for example on the recognition of foreign judgments, and on adoption and child abduction. The organisation's ultimate aim is a world in which individuals and companies can count on legal certainty in spite of differences between their countries' legal systems.

Campus The Hague (part of Leiden University), The Hague Academy of International Law and the International Institute of Social Studies provide education in subjects including diplomacy and international private and public law. Their presence in The Hague helps attract legal scholars and students from the Netherlands and abroad.

### Non-governmental organisations

The Hague's development as a centre of expertise on peace and justice has led in recent years to a growth in the number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) located in the city. About 135 of them are now based here, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesty International, UNICEF and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC). These NGOs focus on a wide range of issues, from development cooperation and international law to peace and global security.



**“The Hague is a fascinating city to work in.”**

- Abi Williams, president of The Hague Institute for Global Justice

This factsheet is a joint publication by the Municipality of The Hague and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 2015. For more information on The Hague, International City of Peace and Justice, please visit the website:

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