This year marks the twentieth anniversary of No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), founded in 1994 with the mandate of campaigning for the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a critical part of an effective system of international criminal justice. NPWJ is celebrating its long-standing commitment to end impunity by organising a conference to discuss the interplay between two fundamental elements underpinning the Rome ICC Statute, namely cooperation and complementarity.

In its initial 10 years, the ICC has done a great deal of work on specific policy issues including gender, prosecutorial policies and case selection, the handling of preliminary examinations, and most recently has begun working on a children’s policy. These policies have drawn together fundamental principles and lessons learnt by the ICC over the course of its first 10 years, alongside lessons learnt by other international courts and tribunals. They represent a growing body of literature that can support both the ICC and others in doing the best possible work in the best possible way.

The ICC is facing increasing complexities in respect of the fundamental issues of cooperation and complementarity. Its relationship with various regions, notably Africa, is marked by strong support on the one hand and suspicion and even hostility on the other hand. Some members of the international community are trying to give the ICC jurisdiction over massive violations against civilians in various situations, including Syria. Other members of the international community are challenging the ICC’s credibility and legitimacy, failing to provide cooperation and support to the Court. These contradictions hinder the ICC in carrying out its mandate to fight impunity, whether through promoting national proceedings (i.e. complementarity) or through investigation and prosecution of cases within its competence, for which it needs support from States Parties and others (i.e. cooperation).
The time is ripe to examine the interplay between cooperation and complementarity, the two foundational elements of the ICC. This conference will examine those issues through its high-level participants addressing a series of questions, including:

- what does cooperation mean at the different stages through which situations pass, i.e. preliminary examination, investigation, prosecution? how is cooperation from a situation country different, what are the challenges and how can different stakeholders help?
- what are the limitations on the ICC assisting a country to become “able” and how can these be addressed (e.g. resources, liaising with other actors etc)?
- what is the role for the ICC during the commission of crimes and in pre-situation countries (e.g. in Kenya in early 2008, in Syria now)? how is it different between States Parties and non-States Parties?
- what is the role of other actors in supporting the ICC in respect of cooperation and complementarity?
- how can other States help in respect of complementarity, for example through universal jurisdiction?
- how can the ICC and others help building the capacity of interlocutors, whether collecting information that could be provided to the ICC or to national jurisdictions, bearing in mind the ICC’s mandate and resources?

Following an opening segment of keynote speakers, the conference will be held as a moderated discussion, to facilitate engaged and open discussion on these and other critical issues.