

‘THINKING AND DOING’ AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEACE AND JUSTICE

The Story of The Hague Institute for Global Justice



BY DR. ABIODUN WILLIAMS
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What is it about The Hague that makes it unique as an international city? Certainly the constellation of courts and tribunals to which the city plays host has solidified its reputation as a center of jurisprudence. Important too, are the institutions focused on conflict prevention, resolution and the advancement of human rights with which the city has been synonymous since the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899. To my mind, the particularity of the city is not limited to a single attribute; rather it is precisely the combination of these different institutions which gives The Hague such singularity. Not only a city of law; not just a center for politics, but a place where officials, practitioners and scholars gather in the pursuit of peace and justice.

This understanding of The Hague informed the origins of The Hague Institute for Global Justice. The vision of its founders, particularly the city’s Mayor, Jozias van Aartsen, was of a multi-disciplinary institute which mirrored the diversity of The Hague’s institutions. The challenge was to harness the knowledge that exists in those organizations and – through academic rigor and convening power – to amplify the city’s expertise, thereby improving global policy and practice.

To fulfil its mission, The Hague Institute, launched in 2011, established three research programs – Conflict Prevention, Rule of Law and Global Governance – and three ways of working: policy-relevant research; convening experts and training practitioners. In this respect we are not merely a traditional ‘think tank’,



“WE ARE NOT MERELY A TRADITIONAL ‘THINK TANK’, BUT RATHER A ‘THINK AND DO TANK”

but rather a ‘think and do tank’. The distinction is an important one for it underscores our ambition not only to undertake research, but to ensure that the innovative policy advice we generate goes directly to improving the lives of individuals and the capacity of institutions in the countries where we work.

In our short history, we have made important strides towards our mission of strengthening the global framework for preventing conflict and promoting

international peace. Now home to 20 world-class researchers, we advance policy solutions in domains as diverse as Education and Conflict Prevention, Transitional Justice and Internet Governance.

Our research is honed and tested through interaction with experts. Indeed, underpinning The Hague Institute’s success has been our successful collaboration with the diplomatic community, many of whose members have joined us to share their knowledge, including by hosting events at the Institute. Such partnerships have included discussions on European Integration, Transatlantic Relations and the prosecution of Sexual and Gender Based Crimes.

This convening power has allowed our research to resonate far beyond the borders of the city, even while we remain rooted in the unique expertise that it provides. This marriage of the global and local has informed some of our most important projects, from The Hague Approach, a set of principles on peace-building launched at the Peace Palace to mark its centenary, to the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance, co-chaired by the leader of our Advisory Council, Secretary Madeleine Albright, and Prof. Ibrahim Gambari. The Commission’s report will be launched in The Hague this June.

With the continued support of the diplomatic community, the municipality, and ministerial departments, The Hague Institute looks forward to continuing its mission, and to working with new partners, in this city and across the globe.