

WELCOMING CEREMONY: BANGLADESH

**Statement, H.E. Mr. Jorge Lomónaco (Mexico)
Vice - President of the Assembly of States Parties**

Mr. President,

Madame Registrar,

The Representative of the Office of the Prosecutor,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we are celebrating Bangladesh' commitment to international justice. By ratifying the Rome Statute on 23 March, Bangladesh demonstrated its determination to join the efforts of the international community in putting an end to the most heinous crimes: crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

We all can agree that, for sake of the victims of such execrable crimes, it is essential that the regular statements about commitments to combat impunity do materialize into concrete actions. Bangladesh is not only the first South Asian country that ratified the Rome Statute, but it was also the first South Asian country that signed the Statute. As a result of this decision, 156 million more persons are now protected by the legal regime of the Rome Statute system. Besides this impressive figure, it is worth noting that most of the population of Bangladesh is Muslim, which marks another milestone towards what I would call true universality, as the Rome Statute was negotiated with the view to incorporating into its system States from all regions and the diversity of their legal systems and judicial traditions.

Asia remains the most underrepresented region in the Rome Statute regime. With the incorporation of Bangladesh, only 15 out of 52 United Nations member States in the continent have joined the ICC. Only one of the former Soviet Republics in Asia is a State Party. Five of the 15 -one third- are island nations located in the Pacific. Membership from mainland Asia is therefore limited to ten countries, which indicates the relativity of an otherwise successful drive towards universality. Clearly, a good part of our energy on universality should be concentrated in the years to come on the largest and most populous continent.

In this context, the incorporation of Bangladesh to the Rome Statute regime should be appropriately valued. First and foremost, it is of outmost importance for the Bengali people and its government. But it is also of great geopolitical relevance. Prior to it, if we were to draw an arch below the high mountain ranges of Asia, between Jordan on one extreme and the far Eastern countries of South Korea and Japan on the other, we would only find Cambodia and Afghanistan as State Parties. Bangladesh sits right at the center of this arch and, as an important player of its sub region; its incorporation sends a very strong message to the rest of the Indian subcontinent: come and join the ICC family in the fight for global justice.

On behalf of the Assembly of States Parties, I offer a warm welcome to Bangladesh.
