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Madam President,

Members of the Assembly,

Distinguished delegates,

I am honoured to take the floor before the Assembly of States Parties on behalf of the Italian Government. Italy fully supports the statement delivered by Lithuania on behalf of the European Union.

As We celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, its universality remains one of the fundamental objectives of the process that led to the International Criminal Court. The results achieved so far through the ratification of, and accession to, the Rome Statute have been remarkable: 122 States from all Regions are now Parties to the Statute. These numbers prove that geographical distance does not matter when it comes to putting an end to mass atrocities. Furthermore, wider acceptance of the Rome Statute means also strengthening the ICC role of preventive diplomacy.

The Assembly takes place at a real crossroad in the Court's life. The ICC has seen a constant increase in its credibility as a key institution for today's international order. Nevertheless, this achievement and the role itself of the Court seem at times to be questioned. Of course, We are not oblivious to the challenges the Court is undergoing.

Peace, development and opportunities for a democratic and prosperous future are the product of the courage and the determination to stay the course on justice, human rights and the rule of law. This said, We must be, and are, open to listening, to discussing and to finding solutions when we face challenges. For these reasons, We believe the issue related to the relationship with the African Union should not be underestimated and must be addressed to maintain the confidence of African States. I could not imagine any stronger signal of confidence in the Court than referral from four African States Parties of situations that occur on their own territories. Many principles of the Rome Statute are the same as those contained in the African Union's Charter. The ICC needs Africa in the same way that Africa needs the ICC to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes committed in that continent, on the basis of the principle of complementarity. Recent attempts to find solutions that would both respect the Statute's principles, including the rights of the accused, and meet the concerns of African countries should be supported.

In its interpretation of the Rome Statute and the Rules of Procedures and Evidence, I believe that the ICC has shown great consideration of the spirit and letter of those two foundational instruments. In this regard, Italy recognizes the role played, in particular, by the judges and by President Song and I truly appreciated the recent intervention before the UN General Assembly by the Court's President on the occasion of the presentation of the ICC Annual Report.

A proper application of the principle of complementarity is fundamental for the good functioning of ICC. Italy believes that the Court and its jurisprudence is achieving this balance. At the same time, more efforts are

needed to promote genuine national investigations and trials for international crimes. From the same perspective, the role of ICC in promoting peace and stability requires enhanced outreach. If we want the communities concerned to cooperate with the Court, they must understand what it is and what its purposes are. They must feel confident that the Court is acting for their benefit.

Madam President,

it is our belief that there is no conflict between peace and justice. Inasmuch as there is no justice without peace, there can be no peace without justice. Peace and justice can be pursued also by sanctioning leaders who have committed, ordered or who are otherwise responsible for atrocious crimes. Peace and justice can be reached through the participation of victims in the proceedings which can foster and facilitate national reconciliation processes. For this reason, effective international cooperation with the ICC is crucial for the fulfillment of its mandate. The ICC does not have its own enforcement agencies or forces; it has to rely on State cooperation. In this respect, the first years of activity of the Court have not led to completely satisfactory results. More efforts are needed, in particular with regard to the execution of arrest warrants and the adoption of implementing legislation for cooperation and assistance by States to the Court. Italy has adopted the relevant domestic legislation as an important tool for strengthening such cooperation.

Italy is also in favour of more determined action by the Assembly of States Parties and, as appropriate, by the Security Council in ensuring that the arrest warrants are executed. We fully share the initiatives on cooperation

with the ICC undertaken by the European Union and I express the Italian appreciation for those taken by the United Nations.

To be effective in promoting long-lasting peace and stability, it is essential that the Court engages with the victims. In this regard, participation of victims in the proceedings before the Court and the effectiveness of reparation for damage are essential elements of the Rome Statute. Italy wishes to emphasize the central role played by the “Trust Fund for Victims” established by the Statute and to which Italy has contributed 40.000 Euros in 2013. Together with the judicial proceedings of the Court, the ICC’s Trust Fund provides a concrete response to the needs of numerous victims and their families.

We also welcome the Prosecutor’s Strategic Plan 2012-2015, its vision and strategic goals. We share the opportunity of having a stronger field presence of persons from the region with broader country knowledge. We appreciate the focus on further improving the quality and efficiency of prosecutions in order to achieve the fundamental objective of pursuing the truth. Attention to the most vulnerable victims, in particular children and women, is of utmost importance.

More broadly, We support the proposed amendment to the Rule 100 to facilitate the decision by the Court to sit in a State other than the host State, if this is in the interest of justice. This is an important aspect of the Court achieving and maintaining a strong field presence and we look forward to its approval at this Assembly.

In order to maintain and strengthen its impact, the ICC must be provided with sufficient resources, but also ensuring that those are used effectively and efficiently.

Madam President,

The bottom line is that, to achieve its aims, ICC requires, and we as States Parties and the international community must supply, judicial cooperation, financial support and, most importantly, political support. Of course, support does not mean being blind to all criticism, nor blind to the areas in which the ICC should and must improve.

Political support means not only speaking out in support of the Court whenever it is under threat, it also means identifying those areas where action is needed and pushing the Court to move forward.

In conclusion, Madam President, my presence here today testifies once again Italy's full support to international criminal justice. I hope that this session of the Assembly will provide an opportunity for reaffirming an overall commitment to sustain the Court in its endeavours and for entertaining a constructive dialogue on the issues of concern to all States Parties.

I believe, Madam President, that the challenges We are facing can be overcome by recognizing the problems in their concrete political and legal dimensions and by finding solutions that are in full respect of the ICC Statute. At the same time We should remain faithful to the vision We had fifteen years ago when We adopted the Rome Statute to meet the demand for justice and the refusal of impunity for the gravest international crimes.

Thank you.