



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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**Assembly of States Parties  
to the Rome Statute of  
the International Criminal Court**

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**Statement**

by  
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(check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Let me start by congratulating you on your election as the new President of the Assembly of States Parties. Your strong personal commitment to the fight against impunity will be a source of inspiration to us all. You can count on my government's full support in your important task and we wish you the best of success. I would also like to express our most sincere appreciation to Ambassador Tiina Intelmann for her extraordinary contribution to the functioning of this Assembly during her term as the President of the Assembly, and to President Song for his outstanding leadership of the Court. Our sincere appreciation goes to the Prosecutor of the Court, Mrs. Fatou Bensouda, and all the other organs of the Court for their excellent contribution again during this year for the cause of justice.

I would also like to congratulate the newly elected judges, the members of the Committee on Budget and Finance as well as the newly elected members of the Bureau. Our sincere appreciation goes to the outgoing judges for their excellent contribution to the cause of justice during their tenures.

Mr. President,

Finland continues to be strongly committed to the fight against impunity for the most serious international crimes and a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court. We are committed to safeguarding the independence and integrity of the Court and its proceedings.

The current crises in various parts of the world, involving massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, have highlighted the need for enhanced international efforts to fight impunity. The ICC has become the true cornerstone of these efforts. The Court stands as a reminder to all those contemplating to commit such crimes that impunity will not be tolerated. It has brought the need for justice to the center of peace talks, and inspired countries to develop their own national justice systems to deal with the most serious crimes. Where these efforts fail, the ICC stands for assistance.

The Court has been remarkably active again during the course of this year. The first final verdicts of the Court – namely the recent judgment confirming the verdict against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo and the judgment against Germain Katanga in March this year - mark important steps in the functioning of the Court. We look forward to the final decisions on reparations in these cases, which will in a concrete manner bring justice to victims of these heinous crimes. Almost ten thousand victims have been represented in various cases before the Court, and through the preliminary investigations, the Court is active in most parts of the world. Another significant development during this year is the adoption of the Prosecutor's new Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes, which we warmly welcome.

Mr. President,

Full cooperation with the Court by all States and other international actors, such as the United Nations Security Council, is essential for the Court's success. Improved cooperation is needed in all areas, including investigations and collection of evidence, witness protection as well as arrest and surrender of suspects. The challenge of non-cooperation must be addressed with determination. We look forward

to the forthcoming discussion on Cooperation, with special emphasis on sexual and gender based crimes.

An important tool to facilitate cooperation with the Court is to build the capacity of States through seminars and workshops. Finland was pleased to be able to contribute to such seminars, arranged this year in Dakar, Senegal, in the Hague, the Netherlands and in Johannesburg, South Africa. These seminars have proved to be successful in fostering cooperation and dialogue between the various stakeholders.

We would also like to underline the importance of the Court's outreach and communication efforts which are essential for the Court's proceedings and achievements to be better understood within the situation countries and the affected communities. We also welcome the efforts of the Court, and of the Registry in particular, through its ReVision project, to strengthen its presence in the field.

The international community can also provide valuable assistance to states in their efforts to investigate and prosecute for the most serious international crimes. An outstanding example of such assistance is the roster of experts of the Justice Rapid Response mechanism. The experts on the Roster can be rapidly deployed at the request of states or international organizations to investigate, analyze and report on situations where violations of international criminal law and serious human rights violations may have occurred. A further example is the Legal Tools Project of the ICC, which provides equal access to legal sources and information at the national level. This contributes significantly to national capacity development in criminal justice.

Mr. President,

As to the proposals to amend the Rome Statute currently pending in the Working Group of Amendments, Finland cannot support any amendment which would undermine the integrity of the Rome Statute or the independence of the Court and its organs. In particular we are opposed to amending Article 27 of the Rome Statute. The recognition that official status is not a bar to prosecution for the gravest crimes at the international level is a key achievement in international criminal law and a fundamental element for the achievement of sustainable peace and stability.

Mr. President,

In order to achieve the goal of universality, we call upon all States not yet a State Party to join the Rome Statute. We also call for the Security Council to use its referral powers in a consistent manner. It is an issue of grave concern that the situation in Syria has not yet been referred to the Court despite the ongoing atrocities in the country, and the commendable efforts within the Council to do so.

I am glad to inform that Finland is in the final stages of ratifying the Kampala amendments to the Rome Statute, namely the crime of aggression and the amendments to Article 8. A Government proposal was submitted to Parliament just last week. The national procedures are expected to be finalized during the first half of 2015.

Mr. President,

The Rome Statute is unique in that it grants victims of the ICC crimes extensive participatory rights in different phases of the Court proceedings. Discussions are ongoing on how to ensure effective participation in view of the large number of victims in each case. In considering this, it is of utmost importance to ensure that the participation of victims continues to be meaningful for victims themselves. In this context, we look forward to the results of the ongoing study of University of California, Berkeley, partly financed by Finland, which will provide us insight into how victims themselves see their participatory rights.

Mr. President,

I would like to express my government's strong support for the important mandate of the ICC Trust Fund for Victims. We would like to stress that the creation of the Trust Fund for Victims by the Rome Statute implies collective responsibility for all States Parties to create conditions for its successful performance with respect to both its reparations and assistance mandate. We commend the excellent work done by the Trust Fund so far in northern Uganda and DRC. We were pleased to hear that in the near future the Trust Fund is planning to expand its projects to other situation countries. We also welcome the Trust Fund's Strategic Plan for years 2014-2017. Finland's multiannual support 2012-2015 is currently earmarked for the support of victims of sexual and gender-based crimes. In addition to this, we are in the final phases of adopting a decision on additional financial contribution this year in the amount of 300 000 euros to the common basket of the Trust Fund. Together with actors from the private sector and civil society, we have taken an initiative in Finland to inspire private donations to the Trust Fund.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by paying tribute to the large number of victims, who deserve to receive acknowledgment, justice and reparations for the enormous harm they have suffered as a result of the most heinous crimes, and to the witnesses testifying before the Court, whose efforts are essential for establishing the truth and for reaching justice.

Thank you Mr. President.