

13th Session of the Assembly of State Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

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Statement by Mr Martin Sørby
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Mr President,

Norway would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the Assembly of States Parties, and to welcome you as the first President from the African Group. We would also like to thank the former President for her hard work over the course of the past three years, and wish her every success in her future endeavours.

Our most sincere appreciation is also extended to the officials and staff of all organs of the ICC for their significant efforts in the fight against impunity. We thank you for your tireless work in 2014, and would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the Court as a judicial and independent institution that has now become an important, global actor.

Mr President,

As States Parties to the Rome Statute, we have a common interest in maintaining the Court's strength, effectiveness and independence, both with regard to its Chambers and the Office of the Prosecutor.

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The establishment of the ICC in 1998 was a milestone, but it was merely the first step. Continuous efforts have been and will be needed to maintain and strengthen its capacities and its key role in the global fight against impunity.

This role, and the challenges that accompany it, mean that there is an ever-growing need for efforts to strengthen the institutional framework and working methods of the Court and the Assembly. In this context, we welcome this year's proposals concerning the omnibus resolution, which seek to increase the efficiency of the Court and the Assembly. We also welcome the proposal to amend the Rules of Procedure and Evidence with regard to translations.

Mr President,

The intrinsic links between institutional strength, effectiveness, fairness and the independence of the Court are also clearly evident in the annual budgetary debates. We must recognize the concrete impact that our decisions on this matter may have on the ability of the Court and the Office of the Prosecutor to carry out thorough assessments and open-ended investigations. It is our responsibility to ensure that we demonstrate our confidence in the ICC and our high expectations of the Court by providing sufficient financial resources for its work.

Mr President,

Now, more than ever, it is important to focus on States Parties' cooperation with the Court. Our role in implementing the decisions and meeting the requests of the Court follows from our legal obligations under the Rome Statute. However, this work is also clearly necessary as a direct response to the threat to global peace and security posed by crimes that fall under

the jurisdiction of the Court. In this context, we urge all States to comply with their legal obligations under Security Council resolutions 1593 and 1970 concerning the situations in Darfur and Libya, and to refrain from engaging in non-essential contact with individuals who are under arrest warrants from the Court.

On a practical note, Norway is now in the final phases of establishing an agreement with the Court on the enforcement of sentences. We encourage other states to consider doing the same, or alternatively to enter into voluntary bilateral agreements in other areas of relevance to the Court.

Mr President,

This year's debate on cooperation will focus in particular on sexual and gender-based violence. Thanks to the efforts of states, civil society and policy-makers alike, this category of crimes has been given special attention in 2014. We especially welcome the adoption of the OTP's Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-based Crimes, which is an important step towards achieving national and international recognition of the dire impact such crimes have on individuals and communities. Mention should also be made of the UK-driven process earlier this year, which resulted in the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict. The development of basic standards and best practices in this field is important in reacting to the impunity gap in this area of international criminal law. Investigation of sexual violence in the context of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide should be a key strategic goal not only for the ICC, but also for national jurisdictions.

Mr President,

Norway hereby reaffirms its strong commitment to the mission and mandate of the ICC, to end impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to mankind. We look forward to a constructive, productive and inclusive process at this 13th Assembly of States Parties.

Thank you.