

President Kaba,

In founding the International Criminal Court, we, the States Parties sought to strengthen justice and fight impunity. To ensure that a perpetrator's rank, status or title would be no shield. To prosecute the world's most heinous crimes and to end the impunity of the world's worst criminals. And to seek to prevent these very horrors.

We sought these noble ends because we believe that the most serious crimes not only kill, torture or injure, but endanger the peace and security of the entire world.

Fine words. But for our hopes to be realized, we must work together. No progress is possible without our joint resolution and committed cooperation.

Our first task, then, is to enhance cooperation with the Court.

The year opened, States Parties will recall, with the transfer of Dominic Ongwen, alleged Lords Resistance Army commander, to the Court. Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, the first person indicted in relation to the situation in Mali, was also arrested and surrendered to the Court this year.

These are positive developments. But a concerning number of arrest warrants remain unexecuted.

The arrest and surrender of indictees is the responsibility of all States Parties. We must all ensure that those trying to escape justice have no place to hide and no place to flee.

We therefore welcome the draft Action Plan on Arrest Strategies. The Plan offers concrete steps that States Parties, the Court, civil society and other members of the international community, can take. We urge all States Parties to support the Action Plan and, like Australia, commit to ensuring that the tools it identifies are actively and consistently implemented.

Mr President,

We must also consider deleting Article 124. We believe that the deletion of this provision would be consistent with the object and purpose of the Rome Statute. We invite our fellow States Parties to likewise support deletion.

States Parties will recall that we, this Assembly, asked the Court to consider how its proceedings might be made more efficient and effective. The Court's Working Group on Lessons Learnt responded to this call by preparing proposed amendments to the Rules for consideration by States Parties.

We are therefore disappointed that the Working Group on Amendments has been unable to agree to recommend the adoption of the language cluster of amendments. In Australia's view, it is our duty to consider these proposals constructively, with a view to adopting amendments that will enhance the Court's work.

As custodians of the Rome Statute, we, the States Parties, have an important role to play in the management oversight of the administration of the Court. In our view, this responsibility is a significant one that States Parties must carry out within their remit under the Rome Statute. In doing so, we must fully respect the judicial and prosecutorial independence of the Court.

Mr President,

In our deliberations, we must never lose sight of the fact that this Court was created to deliver justice for the victims of Rome Statute crimes. And we must never forget the crucial role played by those victims and others who give voice to the horrors they have witnessed.

For this reason, Australia contributed to the Trust Fund for Victims and the Trust Fund for the Relocation of Witnesses this year.

We also need to continue our review of the victims' participation system in order to ensure that the role played by victims in Court proceedings remains workable. We again urge the Assembly to consider how we can best take forward this work in the coming year.

Mr President,

It is Australia's firm conviction that the effective investigation and prosecution of serious international crimes is essential to the prevention of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Criminal justice is integral to the establishment of an inclusive and lasting peace.

The preamble to the Rome Statute recalls that every State Party has a duty to exercise its criminal jurisdiction over those responsible for international crimes.

For let none of us forget that this Court is a court of last resort. Without a strong Court, justice will be denied. We know that. It is our duty to support the Court who speaks for the victims whose voices were once not heard, the victims who had no where to turn. Let's all of us raise our voices and our hopes for them.

For our part, Australia reaffirms our unwavering commitment to, and confidence in, the ICC.