

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



ICELAND

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Statement by

Ms. Sesselja Sigurdardóttir, Counsellor,

at the General Debate

of the

**14th session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of
the International Criminal Court**

The Hague, 19 November 2015

Mr. President, Members of the Assembly, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would first of all like to congratulate Judge Silvia Fernandez de Gurmendi on her election as the first female President of the International Criminal Court. Let me also congratulate Judge Raul Cano Pangalangan on his recent appointment. I wish them all the best in their work. Furthermore, we would like to welcome the State of Palestine as the newest Member to the ICC.

Iceland has been a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court since its foundation. We are in the process of ratifying the Kampala-amendments to the Rome Statute and expect that process to be concluded this spring.

The ICC is at the forefront in the battle against impunity for the atrocities that regrettably are still taking place in the world today. We therefore welcome the increased activities of the Court, including new and ongoing preliminary examinations, recent appeals judgments and ongoing trials. It is our hope that the Court's activities may not only contribute to justice but that it may also serve as a deterrent to possible perpetrators.

With an increasing caseload and limited resources high standards of financial responsibility are important for the work of the Court. We thus welcome President Fernández's emphasis on enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. We also welcome the focus on this issue during this Assembly.

Mr. President,

Obtaining international criminal justice cannot be achieved by one single institution but is, and has to be seen, as a joint venture of many parties.

The obligation of States to cooperate with the Court, embedded in Art. 86 of the Rome Statute, is well known. In light of the many outstanding arrest warrants, Iceland urges all States to fully assist and cooperate with the Court when circumstances so require. We further underline the importance of safeguarding the independence and integrity of the Court and its organs.

Under the complementarity principle, the ICC is a court of last resort. The primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute international crimes lies with the States Parties. Enhanced national capacity is

therefore of fundamental importance and we welcome efforts made in this regard.

In addition, the supportive role of international and regional organisations for the success of the Court should not be overlooked. We welcome the good cooperation between the Court and the United Nations, as well as ideas for mainstreaming the Court in the UN system. At the same time, we call for even deeper cooperation and unequivocal support.

Given the lack of universality of the Rome Statute at this point, referrals from the Security Council are a necessary aspect of the functioning of the Court. Some of the most pressing situations in the world today are taking place in non-ICC-Member States. Iceland would therefore welcome more referrals from the Council, most urgently the situation in Syria. As evident from the situations already submitted, continued follow-up and political support of the Council is also of utmost importance for the Court to be able to carry out its mandate.

Mr. President,

As a strong voice for gender equality, Iceland appreciates the increased focus on sexual and gender based violence both among States Parties and the Office of the Prosecutor.

Victims are at the core of the functioning of the ICC. An important part of bringing them justice is the comprehensive support carried out by the Trust Fund for Victims. We commend the Trust Fund for its invaluable work. We particularly welcome its support to the advancement of women and addressing the impact of sexual and gender based violence.

In conclusion, Iceland believes that the work before us this week, concerning universality, complementarity and increased cooperation, will result in a well functioning Court. We are hopeful that the ICC will achieve the goal of global jurisdiction bringing real justice to victims if all States Parties lend their active commitment.

Thank you.