

**STATEMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES**  
**General Debate of the 14<sup>th</sup> session of the Assembly of States Parties**  
**to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**  
World Forum, The Hague, Netherlands  
Thursday, 19 November 2015

Mr. President, your Excellencies, colleagues:

Allow me to congratulate you Mr. President for your able stewardship of the Bureau of the Assembly of States Parties since your election at our 13<sup>th</sup> session. Under your leadership, the Bureau has taken focused steps in pursuing the goals and agenda in the arduous task of making international criminal justice work.

I also wish to congratulate Judge Silvia Fernandez de Gurmendi for her election in March as the first woman President of the International Criminal Court, and for the fresh impetus and vitality she has given to the increasingly complex and challenging work of the Court.

My congratulations also go to the Prosecutor, Mrs. Fatou Bensouda, for her continuing work, pursuing her mandate with resolute will and determination, and to the Registrar, Mr. Herman von Hebel, for the important support he has consistently extended to the different offices that contribute to the effective working of the Court.

Congratulations also to the Focal Points of the Bureau, the Chairs and Members of the Working Groups who have done a very good job in carrying out their mandates and advancing the work of the Bureau and the Assembly.

Mr. President, upon your election as President of the Assembly, we expressed full agreement with your own belief that, to quote you, "justice can contribute through its work in the prevention, deterrence, punishment, repair, and restoration of the dignity of the victim, and in releasing people from collective guilt."

In supporting your mission, the Philippines reaffirms its commitment to fighting impunity, to ensuring that perpetrators account for their crimes. For if we cannot deliver international criminal justice, then global peace and security would not be possible.

Since becoming a founding member of the United Nations seventy years ago, the Philippines has always advocated for the rule of law in support of peace and security, human rights and development.

Just as Nuremburg and other international criminal tribunals pointed to individuals as authors of untold sorrow and injustice to multitudes, so must we recognize individuals like you and your team who contribute to the collective work of delivering international justice. We all know this to be a vocation that is certainly difficult, sometimes thankless and possibly dangerous. They also include individual members of the Secretariat across the UN family involved in the delivery of justice; the judges of the Court; the Prosecutor; their respective staff; and the lawyers, civil society advocates, witnesses and victims, many of whom are unnamed and unrecognized.

Indeed, it is people, individually at first – then collectively – who make justice work.

The Philippines closely follows the developments in the work of the Court and of the Prosecutor.

Consistent with the principle of complementarity, and as part of our duty of cooperation, we strive to ensure that our criminal justice system is transparent, fair, effective and relatively speedy, allowing for the prosecution of the crimes under the Rome Statute. The Philippine legislation enacted in 2009 on *Crimes against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and Other Crimes Against Humanity* (Republic Act No. 9851) paved the way for our ratification of the Rome Statute.

It is in our common interest to uphold the credibility of both the Court and the Security Council. With respect to the relationship between these two key institutions, the Philippines has joined the call on the Council to take the necessary follow-up measures on situations it has referred to the Court. This would ensure accountability. In this connection, the Philippines also joined the "Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes", elaborated in the context of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group in the UN General Assembly. The P5 should refrain from using their veto in situations involving mass atrocity crimes under the jurisdiction of the Court.

We acknowledge the difficult efforts to streamline the Court's staff complement with the Revision Project. We hope this would preserve the balance of personnel in the Court in terms of gender and geographical representation among the States Parties, and would appreciate receiving a more detailed explanation on the criteria for personnel retention.

The Philippines welcomes the recent appointment of the head of the Independent Oversight Mechanism in view of the very important role he will be undertaking in the ICC system.

Mr. President, as States Parties, we should help each other to protect human rights and build domestic capacities, including through human resource development-related assistance like the training of judges, prosecutors, the police and the military.

As a constitutional policy, the Philippines recognizes and supports the contribution of civil society to nation-building. In a similar vein, we think that they also have a role to play in making international criminal justice work. To more broadly discuss their contribution, the Philippines in cooperation with the Open Society Justice Initiative is sponsoring a side event titled "*Civil Society and the International Criminal Court: Local Perspectives on Fact-Finding*". We wish to invite you to this event, which will take place on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 PM at the Africa Room.

The Philippines would like to take this opportunity to thank once again the States Parties for their confidence in the abilities of Prof. Dr. Raul Pangalangan to contribute to the work of the Court, and for electing him as a judge for the next six years.

Mr. President, our goal is universality. We join the call for many more countries to ratify or accede to the Rome Statute, particularly from our Asia-Pacific region.

This year, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which now defines our global development framework. We will achieve that agenda only if we have peace – and security – based on justice, for our generation and for generations yet to come.

Finally, the Philippines joins the international community in its strong condemnation of the terrorist attacks in different parts of the world, most recently in Paris, and we express our deepest sympathies to the families of the victims. These tragedies are a reminder that we should fight impunity in all forms.

Thank you, Mr. President.