



ROYAL NORWEGIAN
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*15th Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute
of the International Criminal Court*

**Statement by
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Mr President,

Let me begin by expressing Norway's sincere appreciation to the President for his able leadership of the Assembly of States Parties in the past year and for the preparations for this meeting. We also welcome Ambassador Sergio Ugalde of Costa Rica as Vice-President of the Assembly, and take the opportunity to thank him for his important contributions as coordinator of the Hague Working Group.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the officials and staff of all the organs of the Court for their tireless efforts in the fight against impunity. The dedication and professionalism with which the staff at all levels of the Court perform their work is crucial for ensuring that the International Criminal Court is efficient and independent.

Mr President,

We welcome the Court's move into its new premises in The Hague this year. The new building, which has been funded by the States Parties, reflects the Court's standing as a permanent international institution.

The Court's caseload this year has been unprecedented in terms of both numbers and geographical coverage. Situations from five continents have been under preliminary examination or investigation during the year. This geographically varied caseload underlines the Court's relevance for victims in all parts of the world.

The growing caseload also reminds us of the importance of ensuring that the Court has adequate resources to fulfill its mandate effectively and independently. It is essential that the Court maintains sufficient human and technical resources to conduct thorough and independent investigations and procedures. We urge the Court to continue to optimise the use of its limited resources and to seek further synergies and efficiencies within the mandates of its organs. The 'One Court' principle as a basis for the 2017 budget is a significant improvement. We also appreciate the Committee on Budget and Finance's professional advice recommending the appropriate level of resources needed and indicating where further savings may be found.

Mr President,

I would like to reiterate our strong commitment to the Court as a judicial and independent institution that has become an important global actor. Over the last decade,

international criminal justice has played a crucial part in the international community's response to mass atrocities. Justice has been achieved for many victims as a result of ICC judgments. Furthermore, the growing respect enjoyed by the Court has had an important preventive effect.

Against this backdrop, Norway is concerned about the recent decisions of some States Parties to withdraw from the Rome Statute. We encourage the States in question to reconsider their withdrawal. Norway believes that it should be possible - through dialogue - to address the concerns of these States Parties while at the same time respecting the fundamental principles of the Rome Statute. We reiterate our willingness to participate in such a dialogue within the framework of the Assembly of States Parties.

Some have pointed to challenges relating to upholding the Rome Statute while negotiating peace agreements or providing good offices for peace talks. Norway has experienced that the ICC can play, and has played, a constructive role in peace negotiations, and that mechanisms to prevent impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are important for achieving lasting solutions to conflicts.

Norway looks forward to seeing the Court continuing its important work against impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. Similarly, our efforts as States Parties to achieve universality of the Rome Statute will continue.

Mr President,

As Chair of the Working Group on Amendments, Norway has had the pleasure to facilitate discussions on proposed amendments to the Rome Statute and the Rules of Procedure and Evidence. The Working Group has met on a regular basis during the course of 2016. States Parties have conducted several consultations, and our work has been characterised by a collaborative spirit and productive dialogue. Norway would like to thank all States Parties for engaging so constructively and for their contributions. The Working Group on Amendments has reached consensus on recommending that the ASP adopt two changes to the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, regarding translation of documents and deadlines. We have also made progress in our discussions on some of the proposals to amend the Rome Statute.

In our role as Chair, we have done our utmost to ensure that our discussions are transparent and inclusive. I would like to put the working method and the contribution of the participants in this forum forward as an inspirational example of how States Parties to the Rome Statute have been able to engage each other in a constructive atmosphere in order to find solutions to challenging questions within the framework of the organs established under the Rome Statute.

Mr President,

Let me conclude by reiterating Norway's strong commitment to the mission and mandate of the ICC, namely to end impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to mankind. We look forward to a constructive and productive dialogue on how we can further improve the effectiveness, impact and universality of the Court at this 15th Assembly of States Parties.

Thank you.