Sixteenth session
New York, 4 - 14 December 2017

Report of the Bureau on the Plan of action of
the Assembly of States Parties for achieving universality and
full implementation of the Rome Statute of
the International Criminal Court

I. Introduction

1. At its fifth session, the Assembly of States Parties adopted, by consensus, the Plan of action of the Assembly of States Parties for achieving universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (hereinafter "the Plan of Action").

2. At its fifteenth session, the Assembly of States Parties (hereinafter “the Assembly”) welcomed the annual report of the Bureau on the Plan of action, endorsed the recommendations contained therein and requested the Bureau to continue to monitor the implementation of the Plan and to report thereon to the Assembly during its sixteenth session.

3. The Plan of action calls upon States Parties to proactively make use of the political, financial and technical means at their disposal to promote the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute through bilateral, regional and multilateral relationships. Furthermore, the Plan of Action calls upon the Secretariat to support States in their efforts to promote universality and full implementation of the Statute by acting as a focal point for information exchange, within existing resources, including by collecting and ensuring dissemination of such information. It also requires the Assembly, through its Bureau, to keep the Plan of Action under review.

4. The Bureau of the Assembly of States Parties decided to re-appoint Denmark on 16 February 2017 as ad country focal point to facilitate the implementation of the Plan of action.

5. The reporting period covers the period after the adoption of the previous report (ICC-ASP/15/19, 10 November 2016) until November 2017. During this period, the focal point conducted consultations and briefings in order to exchange information between States, Court officials, members of civil society and other interested parties.


2 Resolution ICC-ASP/15/Res.5 of 24 November 2016, para.5 and annex I, para. 1.
II. Updates on efforts to promote universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute

A. Activities of the Court

6. The Court continued to contribute actively to the efforts to promote universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute in close cooperation with other actors, including the President of the Assembly, Denmark as the focal point on the Plan of Action, States Parties, intergovernmental organizations and civil society. The Court organized several events of relevance during the reporting period, focusing particularly on regions where ICC seminars have not been previously held.

7. Regional cooperation seminars were held on 10 and 11 January 2017 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, for the Caribbean region, and on 4 and 5 April in Seoul, Republic of Korea, for Asian States. Dedicated sessions on universality and national implementation of the Rome Statute featured in the programmes of both events. In connection with the seminar in Seoul, the President of the Court paid a visit to Malaysia to promote consideration of accession to the Rome Statute. A regional cooperation seminar for Francophone West and Central African States took place in Niamey, Niger, from 24 to 26 October, with particular emphasis on national implementation of the Rome Statute.

8. On 8 September 2017, the Court convened a workshop on the ICC titled “Membership in the Rome Statute – Why and How” in the margins of the 48th Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Leaders’ Meeting, where the President of the Court also addressed heads of state and government at a separate session. The emphasis of the Court’s mission to the Pacific Islands Forum was particularly on encouraging the eight non-States Parties in the region to consider joining the Rome Statute. Follow-up communication is ongoing with several States.

9. The Court held a four-day seminar on cooperation with national focal points of situation countries and a number of other States in The Hague, 12-15 September 2017, allowing for in-depth discussions and exchange of experiences on practical cooperation matters.

10. On 6 and 7 December 2016, the Court organized a retreat with African States Parties in Addis Ababa with the participation of the Legal Counsel’s Office of the African Union Secretariat. Topics discussed included complementarity as well as promotion of universality. A similar retreat is scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa on 22 and 23 November 2017.

11. The third ICC-European Union Roundtable took place at the Court on 25 April 2017, allowing for in-depth discussions, among other topics, on collaboration in encouraging the ratification and national implementation of the Rome Statute.

12. In addition to assistance from the European Commission, some of the abovementioned events organized by the Court also benefited from the financial support of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie and the Governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of Norway.

13. The President of the Court held bilateral talks with five non-States Parties at the level of head of state, head of government or foreign minister with the specific goal of promoting accession to the Rome Statute. The President furthermore underlined the importance of reaching universal ratification of the Rome Statute in numerous public remarks, including at the United Nations General Assembly. The Prosecutor made one mission to Geneva, where she briefed the diplomatic community including the Group of Friends of the ICC on recent developments at the Court and highlighted the importance of universality and the important work carried out in Geneva in this regard, in the context of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The Prosecutor also participated in an event in Senegal, Dakar marking 17 July as Day of International Criminal Justice, hosted by the President of the Assembly, Minister Sidiki Kaba. The event highlighted, among other things, the importance of achieving universality. More broadly, the principals of the Court promoted the goals of the Plan of Action through speeches and participation at many other conferences and seminars, as well as meetings with various interlocutors.
14. Throughout the reporting period, senior officials of the Court used various opportunities – both during official travel abroad as well as visits of external stakeholders to the ICC – to engage with government officials, parliamentarians and other stakeholders from a large number of States not party to the Rome Statute. During such discussions, Court officials encouraged informed consideration of Rome Statute accession/ratification, underlining the important role of the Rome Statute system in global efforts for accountability as well as clarifying several legal and technical issues related to the Court and the role and obligations of States Parties.

15. To support joint efforts promoting ratification of the Rome Statute, the Court produced a booklet titled “Joining the International Criminal Court – Why does it matter”, thanks to the financial support of the European Commission, which has been widely distributed and is available on the Court’s website in English and French. Hard copies can be provided by the Court upon request. More generally, the Court’s public information activities continue to serve as an important tool for raising awareness and providing information that is crucial for the promotion of the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute. More than 19,000 visitors, from States Parties as well as non-States Parties, visited the ICC and received presentations on the Court, its mandate and current activities. The Court also continues to support Moot Court competitions in various languages, including Chinese and Russian.

B. Activities of the President of the Assembly and the Secretariat

16. The President of the Assembly of States Parties, Mr. Sidiki Kaba, held a series of meetings throughout the year where he encouraged States to become parties to the Rome Statute and the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court, and stressed the importance for States to have implementing legislation at the national level.

17. On 2 May 2017, the President participated in a regional consultation on the Malabo Protocol in Dakar. He also took part in the 33rd session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly held in San Giljan, Malta, from 19 to 21 June 2017, during which he spoke on the theme of “impunity for crimes against humanity”.

18. On 23 May 2017, the President organized a high-level conference in Dakar on “strengthening African national judicial systems through complementarity and effective and dynamic cooperation with the International Criminal Court” with the participation of several Ministers of Justice of African States Parties and States not party. The President also held a conference on 17 July 2017 in Dakar on the theme “Challenges and Opportunities of the ICC on the Eve of the 20th Anniversary of the Rome Statute” on International Criminal Justice Day.

19. In addition, the President held a series of ministerial-level meetings in New York from 19 to 22 September 2017 in the margins of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. These meetings with States Parties and States not party aimed to promote the universality of the Rome Statute, the adoption of national implementing legislation strengthening the principle of complementarity and cooperation with the Court, and strengthening of the dialogue between Africa and the ICC.

20. Finally, the President participated in a conference on “The International Criminal Court and International Cooperation: The Challenges of Asset Recovery”, organized on 20 October 2017 in Paris by France and Senegal as co-facilitators on cooperation.

21. The Secretariat, for its part, continued to support the collection of information on the promotion of universality and the full implementation of the Rome Statute. As of 8 November the Secretariat had received eight responses to the questionnaire concerning the

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7 Requests can be made to the External Relations and State Cooperation Unit of the Registry, Tel. + 31 (0)70 515 8515.
8 See https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1312.
9 See https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=moot_court_2016_rus.
Plan of action for achieving universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute. Relevant information submitted by States and international organizations can be found on the Assembly's website.9

C. Activities of the focal point

22. The focus for the activities of the focal point in 2017 has been the launch of the social media campaign #JOIN on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms. The centre-piece of the campaign is a short video featuring the President of the Assembly and the Foreign Ministers of Argentina, Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Denmark. The video was pre-screened by the Minister of Finance of Denmark at an event in New York entitled “International Justice Day 2017: Striving for universality of the Rome Statute of the ICC and the criminalization of aggressive war-making”, hosted by Liechtenstein, Italy, The Gambia and Denmark on 17 July 2017. The campaign itself was launched at an event in The Hague on 21 July hosted by Cyprus and Denmark. The campaign has benefitted significantly from support by the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) and Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA).

23. #JOIN is still active and the focal point encourages all stakeholders to visit the Facebook page, view and share the video and participate actively in the campaign at www.facebook.com/universality. In addition the video is available for use at relevant workshops and seminars related to universality.

24. Apart from this, the focal point held individual and joint bilateral consultations with representatives of States, members of civil society, international organizations and the Secretariat. A particular emphasis was placed on organizing informal events for relevant states in the margins of regional summits and other meetings and/or visits by the principals of the Court, as a way of maximizing the impact of such activities and making use of the fact that senior officials were available.

25. In The Hague, the focal point continued the practice of informal information-sharing with representatives of the Court, the Assembly of States Parties and civil society. The aim of this is to enhance coordination and identify ways of exploring synergies, and such an informal mechanism may be developed further.

26. In addition the then co-focal points supported PGA in organizing a 2nd meeting of the Working Group on the Fight Against Impunity in Francophone African Countries in Lomé, Togo, on 15-16 November 2016. The event aimed at promoting universality of the Rome Statute and securing political support for the Court in the region, and involved a large number of parliamentarians from francophone African countries.

D. Activities of international organizations and other organizations

27. During the 26th and 27th sessions of the UPR,10 a State-driven process under the auspices of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, the States under review received recommendations related to the ICC, in particular on the ratification of the Rome Statute, the domestic implementation and ratification of the so-called Kampala amendments and the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Court. In total 31 States from all regional groups made recommendations. The States not party to the Rome Statute under review were: Algeria, Bahrain, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Morocco, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo and Zimbabwe. A total of 80 ICC-related recommendations were made.

28. The European Union (EU) continued its ongoing engagement towards achieving universality of the Rome Statute and promoting a better understanding of the ICC’s mandate, in particular during its regular human rights dialogues with some 40 States, through systematic démarche campaigns worldwide, the organization of dedicated local or regional seminars and the systematic inclusion of an ICC clause into agreements with third States. The EU also assisted the ICC through its Common Security and Defence Policy

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10 For more information see: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session34/Pages/ListReports.aspx and http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session36/Pages/ListReports.aspx.
(CSDP) missions and operations, both facilitating the work of the Court in countries where CSDP Missions are present and providing training on ICC issues through the Mission’s legal and human rights advisors. The EU continued to support the ICC financially, either directly or through civil society organizations advocating for universality of the Rome Statute. The EU also strengthened its support to the development of national judicial systems worldwide, to put the principle of complementarity into effect.

29. The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) continued to promote the universality of the Rome Statute among its member and observer States, based on the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the ICC in September 2012. Activities included support to the ICC for the financing of the Focal Point Seminar held in The Hague at the seat of the Court in September 2017, the Regional High Level Symposium on Cooperation and Complementarity between States and the International Criminal Court (24-26 October 2017, Niamey, Niger) and the High Level Retreat with African Union Member States, Rome Statute Parties, in Addis Ababa in November 2017.

30. The Commonwealth also continued to support the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute. It has developed model legislation and implementation kits on Rome Statute for its member States, and is organizing capacity and awareness raising programmes. Its support to issues relating to the implementation of Rome Statute is demand driven.

31. The Organization of American States (OAS) continued to support the ICC, including through the implementation of the "Exchange of Letters for the Establishment of a Framework Cooperation Agreement with the International Criminal Court" signed at the Headquarters of the OAS on 18 April 201111 and the subsequent resolution of the OAS of 4 June 2014 which promotes ratification of and accession to the Rome Statute and its implementation.12 At its session in June 2017 the General Assembly of the OAS adopted a resolution which, apart from promoting universality and implementation of the Statute, includes specific mandates on efforts to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute and measures to strengthen cooperation with the ICC.13

32. Civil society plays a crucial role in the awareness-raising on the Court, promoting the increased ratification of the Rome Statute and of the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the ICC (“APIC”), the adoption of national implementing legislation, the complementarity principle and cooperation of States Parties with the Court. The NGOs continued their regional and country-based approach in promoting the universality of the ICC, including with missions to and seminars held in non-States Parties. The CICC and PGA continued their wide-ranging and essential activities in this field for which they held frequent consultations with all the stakeholders.

E. Other seminars, events and actions

33. On 18 October 2017 the Bureau of the Assembly of States Parties adopted a decision entitled “Understanding of the participation of Observer States in meetings of the Assembly of States Parties”. The decision, which was proposed and facilitated by Colombia, is the result of extensive discussions by the New York and The Hague Working Groups. The decision takes into account the call of the Assembly to intensify efforts to foster universality and underlines that participation in the various meetings of the Assembly of States Parties “should be conducive to promoting the universality of the Rome Statute”.14 The decision was adopted by consensus by the Bureau.

34. On 9 and 10 December 2016 PGA organized the 9th Consultative Assembly of Parliamentarians on the ICC and the Rule of Law, in Dakar, Senegal. The Assembly was attended by over 100 Parliamentarians from 51 countries of all regions of the world, in addition to representatives of Governments, the ICC and academia. The Assembly concluded with adoption of the “Dakar Plan of Action on the Prevention of Mass Atrocities, Strengthening the Rule of Law and Support for the International Criminal

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“Court”. In the framework of the Assembly, PGA also organised the 7th Session of the Working Group on the Universality of the Rome Statute in the Middle East and North Africa Region.

35. On 17 July 2017, on the occasion of the Day of International Criminal Justice, the CICC launched a campaign entitled “#WarAfterWar”, seeking to build universal support for the Court. In August 2017, the Coalition undertook a dedicated campaign to promote ratification of the APIC by all states.

III. Findings and challenges

36. At the end of the reporting period, the membership of the Rome Statute amounted to 123 with Burundi withdrawing from the Rome Statute. South Africa and The Gambia had also submitted notifications of withdrawals, which were withdrawn before taking effect.

37. From a regional perspective, only five States are missing for a full representation of the Latin American and Caribbean region. The African region continues to be the region with the most States Parties. The Asia-Pacific region remains the most under-represented while the Western European and Other States Group is one of the most represented regions. In the Eastern European region, a few States are still not yet parties.

38. As of 19 October 2017, the amendments to the Rome Statute on the Crime of Aggression and the amendments to article 8, adopted in Kampala, had been ratified by 34 States. During the reporting period, Argentina and Portugal ratified both amendments. One of the two requirements for activation of the Court’s jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, namely the number of ratifications or acceptances as set out in article 15 bis (2), has thus been fulfilled, allowing for the Court’s jurisdiction over said crime to be activated by a decision of the Assembly of States Parties to be taken after 1 January 2017.

39. As of 19 October 2017 the amendment to article 124 adopted by the Assembly of States Parties on 26 November 2015 had been ratified or accepted by six States Parties. During the reporting period Austria, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia ratified or accepted the amendment.

40. As of 19 October 2017, the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the ICC (“APIC”) had been ratified by 77 States, one of which (Ukraine) is not yet party to the Rome Statute. Peru and the Republic of Moldova acceded to the Agreement on 17 January 2017 and 17 May 2017, respectively.

41. Based on the information provided during the reporting period, the key challenges for achieving universality and full implementation are legal difficulties in amending the Constitution or the national legislation in order to ratify the Rome Statute, political challenges that hinder the ratification process, lack of expertise and financial resources, and insufficient information about the functioning of the Rome Statute system and the availability of technical assistance. It was noted that making pertinent official documents and other material of relevance available in all relevant official languages in addition to the two working languages, thereby strengthening outreach activities, could facilitate ratification or accession by States not party. It was also noted that there is no clear definition of the concepts “full implementation” and “implementing legislation”, which could entail different things for different states depending on their legal systems and traditions. These issues could merit further discussion.

42. Besides fostering the political will, which remains an essential priority, stakeholders could enhance their efforts in assisting current or future States Parties with similar legal systems by sharing with them legal expertise and practice. As mentioned, efforts in this regard have been made bilaterally by States and jointly by regional organizations and civil society, but further activities are needed.

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19 See article 15bis(3) of the Rome Statute.
43. It is recalled that States Parties should provide the Secretariat with information on activities undertaken in promoting universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute.

IV. Recommendations

44. In general there is a need for further sustained efforts in promoting the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute and the APIC. Many activities are already being undertaken on an on-going basis, and the scope for better coordination and identification of possible synergies as well as more systematic follow-up on initiatives should be explored further. Enhanced use of ICT and social media could play an important role in this regard, in particular when reaching out to academia and students, building on existing initiatives. Against this background, the following recommendations are made:

A. To the Assembly of States Parties

1. To continue to monitor closely the implementation of the Plan of action.

B. To the States Parties

2. To continue to promote, as far as possible, the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute in their bilateral, regional and multilateral relationships, including enhancing the cooperation between international and regional organizations and the Court;

3. To continue their efforts to disseminate information on the Court at the national, regional and international level, including through events, seminars, publications, courses and other initiatives that may raise awareness about the work of the Court;

4. To continue to provide the Secretariat with updated information relevant to the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute, including current contact information on national focal points;

5. To continue to promote, as far as possible, the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute in collaboration with the Court, civil society, academia, international organizations and professional organizations, bearing in mind the opportune occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute in 2018;

6. To organize, in conjunction with the Court, civil society, academia, international organizations and professional associations, seminars, panel discussions and events focusing on promoting the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute, in New York, in The Hague and in different regions, and to disseminate information about the Court’s work and the provisions of the Rome Statute;

7. To continue to provide, wherever possible, technical and financial assistance to States wishing to become party to the Statute and to those wishing to implement the Statute in their national legislation;

8. To provide financial and/or other support, wherever possible, to civil society, academia, international organizations and professional associations that provide technical assistance to overcome the challenges to ratification and implementation identified in this report;

9. To continue to contribute to the Trust Fund for Least Developed Countries and other developing States to promote the attendance of States not party to the sessions of the Assembly; and

10. To continue to cooperate with the Court so that it can fulfil its functions accordingly.
C. To the Secretariat of the Assembly of States Parties

11. To continue to support States in their efforts to promote the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute by acting as a focal point for information exchange and by making available updated information on this matter, including on the website of the Court;

12. To compile information on all available resources and potential donors, and post it on the Court’s website for easy access by States; and

13. To prepare a matrix to serve the purpose of enhanced information-sharing between potential recipients and donors of technical assistance.
Draft language to be included in the omnibus resolution

Universality of the Rome Statute

1. Invites States not yet parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to become parties to the Rome Statute, as amended, as soon as possible and calls upon all States Parties to intensify their efforts to promote universality;

2. Notes with deep regret the entry into force of the notification of withdrawal submitted by a State Party under article 127(1) of the Statute on 27 October 2016, and calls upon that State to reconsider its withdrawal;¹

3. Welcomes with appreciation the withdrawal by two States Parties of their notifications submitted under article 127(1);²

4. Welcomes with appreciation also the continuation by the President of the Assembly and by the Bureau of the dialogue on the “Relationship between Africa and the International Criminal Court” initiated by the Bureau during the fifteenth session of the Assembly of States Parties, and invites the Bureau to further widen and deepen this dialogue as needed with all interested State Parties;

5. Welcomes the initiatives undertaken to celebrate 17 July as Day of International Criminal Justice³ and recommends that, on the basis of lessons learnt, all relevant stakeholders, together with the Court, continue to engage in preparation of appropriate activities and share information with other stakeholders to that effect through the Secretariat of the Assembly⁴ and otherwise;

6. Calls upon all international and regional organizations as well as civil society to intensify their efforts to promote universality;

7. Decides to keep the status of ratifications under review and to monitor developments in the field of implementing legislation, inter alia with a view to facilitating the provision of technical assistance that States Parties to the Rome Statute, or States wishing to become parties thereto, may wish to request from other States Parties or institutions in relevant areas;

8. Recalls that the ratification of the Rome Statute must be matched by national implementation of the obligations emanating therefrom, notably through implementing legislation, in particular in the areas of criminal law, criminal procedural law and international cooperation and judicial assistance with the Court and, in this regard, urges States Parties to the Rome Statute that have not yet done so to adopt such implementing legislation as a priority and encourages the adoption of victims-related provisions, as and when appropriate;

9. Welcomes the report of the Bureau on the Plan of action for achieving universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute⁵ and notes with appreciation the efforts of the Court’s President, the Office of the Prosecutor, the President of the Assembly, the Assembly, States Parties and of civil society to enhance the effectiveness of universality-related efforts and to encourage States to become parties to the Rome Statute, as amended, and to the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities, as well as relevant efforts undertaken in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council;

⁵ ICC-ASP/16/18.
10. [Considers] that the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute provides a unique opportunity to acknowledge achievements, revitalize commitment to the treaty and increase efforts to address the challenges the Court faces to the effective implementation of its mandate;

11. [Welcomes] the dialogue between States Parties, the Court and members of civil society offered by the plenary discussion on the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute…]

12. [Encourages] the Court, States Parties, relevant international organizations and civil society to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute in 2018, including by convening conferences, concluding cooperation agreements with the Court, adopting national legislation where required and undertaking additional efforts to promote new ratifications of or accessions to the Statute, and to share, through the Secretariat of the Assembly and otherwise, information on planned commemorative events;

**Mandates of the Assembly of States Parties for the intersessional period**

(a) **endorses** the recommendations of the report of the Bureau on the Plan of action for achieving universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute;

(b) **requests** the Bureau continue to monitor the implementation of the Plan of action for achieving universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute and to report thereon to the Assembly at its seventeenth session; and

(c) **decides** to include a specific item on the 20th anniversary on the agenda of the seventeenth session of the Assembly;