



**Embassy of Costa Rica
Kingdom of the Netherlands**

**XVII Assembly of States Parties
Plenary Session
General Debate**

**Statement by the Ambassador of Costa Rica
Sergio Ugalde Godinez**

Mr. President
Members of the Court
Madame Prosecutor
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on presiding this important Assembly. I look forward to cooperating with you and this Assembly, both can count on Costa Rica as close partner and a firm supporter.

Mr. President, this has been an eventful year. On 14 December 2017, we made history by agreeing to activate the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, the supreme international crime, as it was rightly put it by the Nuremberg Tribunal 70 years ago. On 17 July we commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute. While we considered then the achievements thus far, we also highlighted our obligation to continue to confront the very powerful enemy that impunity is, and renewed our promise to provide a meaningful measure of justice to the victims of the worst crimes. We shall not forget that it is for them, for the victims, that we must continue our steady stride, because justice matters!

As to the challenges ahead, while we recognize that there are many, two are particularly significant, as highlighted by you Mr. President. First, we need to reinforce our strategy to achieve universality. This is a key policy matter where the Assembly must have a substantial impact. While commending all countries that are part of the Rome Statute for providing leadership and example, we must also convince those who are not part yet, even those who are openly hostile to the Court, on why they need to support and accept the jurisdiction of an independent system of international criminal justice.

The second challenge is that of meaningful and effective cooperation. On this matter, my country reports that it has adopted important legislation to strengthen its relationship with Court, which in the course of next year we hope to implement.

While it is true that States do not have limitless resources and that any increase in the budget shall always be duly justified, the Court needs the resources it needs, and we must provide them. We agree that the Court must constantly review its ways and accept the constructive oversight of States Parties.

Mr. President, let me commend the Office of the Prosecutor, which has kept a constant course and which despite the limitations it faces, particularly concerning resources, has done and continues to do extraordinary work. The effectiveness of the fight against impunity rests, to a great degree, in the Office of the Prosecutor's ability to fulfill its mandate and we must provide it with the resources necessary to achieve that mandate.

Mr. President, we hail the work carried out by all the facilitators and focal points, whose contribution to the day to day management oversight of the Court is fundamental. I would like to underline the relevant work for achieving universality, complementarity and cooperation. I also wish to commend the Secretariat of the ASP and its staff, for the extraordinary effort and commitment they display day in and day out, despite the unfounded criticism they sometimes must endure.

Mr. President, let me say that the Court's success entails a promise of loyalty. When we undertake a promise to uphold the highest values for the benefit of humanity, we must mean those values and fulfill that commitment. This promise must guide every act from all participants in the system, from States Parties to the Court's staff, to the Court's leadership. Leadership without example, without commitment and without loyalty is the greatest disservice to a cause. Let's make sure that when we decide to form part of this great institution, those are the values that will always guide us and to which we will adhere to rigorously.

Mr. President, today there is an extraordinary level of hostility toward the multilateral framework of international relations. Sadly, the Court has not escaped that hostility. The threats levelled must be taken seriously, but our response must also be resolute. We shall not surrender our values and our collective support to righteousness and to the fight against impunity. We must stand strong together and defend those values with all possible determination. This Court, to which we owe our strongest support, is and will always be a legitimate institution, no matter what, no matter whom, period.

Mr. President, as this is the last time I stand here in representation of my country, I wish to express my gratitude to this Assembly for having entrusted to me to lead some of the most critical issues concerning the Court in our time. I am particularly proud of the collective effort we carried out last December in New York, constructively, by consensus, guided by our principles and by our decency to do the right thing. For having afforded me that privilege, I will be forever grateful to all of you.

Thank you Mr. President.

