

**Your Excellency, Judge O-Gon Kwon, President of the Seventeenth Session of  
the Assembly of States Parties,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

At the outset, allow me to express my delegation's profound appreciation for your commendable leadership at the helm of the ASP. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I further wish to congratulate the newly elected Vice-President, Members of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims, and Members of the Advisory Committee on Nomination of Judges.

**Mr. President,**

In 1998 the international community, reeling from wounds of a brutal and bitter past, and tired of mass atrocity crimes, came together to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Court's creation presented a profound and unprecedented shift in international criminal justice. For the past two decades, the Rome Statute has continued to present our collective efforts to end a culture of impunity for the most heinous crimes that shock the conscience of humankind.

It is in this spirit that Lesotho reaffirms her commitment towards attainment of justice for victims of these horrendous crimes and thus attaches great importance to the role of the ICC in this regard. We reiterate our Country's commitment to support the work of the Court in promoting the rule of law, justice and the respect for human

rights, which in our view are effective pillars for sustainable international peace and security, in a rule-based international order.

**Mr. President,**

Today we are presented with yet another auspicious opportunity to cherish our achievements and to invent ways and means to address current and future challenges. In light of the above, we wish to raise a few pertinent issues that we believe are vital to the future of the Court.

**Mr. President,**

The hallmark of the Rome Statute has always been the principle of complementarity. As a court of last resort, the ICC is intended to supplement not supplant national judicial apparatus. In this regard, we would like to highlight capacity-building of domestic criminal justice systems as crucial to the full implementation of the complementarity principle. Strengthening national criminal justice systems is important for developing States to better deal with the most serious international crimes.

**Mr. President,**

The Court has a global mandate but has not yet attained universal participation. Many of the world's worst conflict zones are still beyond its reach. Achieving universality of the Rome Statute is thus necessary for the Court to accomplish its goals.

Closely related to the question of universality is the issue of cooperation which remains an important pillar in the fight against impunity. It is only when States Parties fully cooperate with the Court, that non-States Parties will be attracted to come into the fold.

**Mr. President,**

A relevant aspect of the Rome Statute system which is sometimes left out of discussions, is the recognition afforded to victims. Through the ingenuity of our forebears, the ICC is the first international court to allow active participation of victims in its proceedings, and to provide reparations through a dedicated Trust Fund established for Victims. To this end, we therefore underscore the importance of ensuring meaningful victim participation and the necessity of the Court's outreach and engagement in affected communities.

**Mr. President,**

Lesotho is committed to the ICC. We are a founder member and actively participated in the negotiations leading to the adoption of the Rome Statute. As a Country, Lesotho holds the view that there is no room for impunity in the global setting. Perpetrators of mass atrocity crimes must be brought to book and punished. The ICC is one institution created by the community of Nations to ensure that the rights of the weak and vulnerable are protected.

**Mr. President,**

Allow me to highlight our national progress in domesticating and implementing the Rome Statute. We are pleased to mention that international crimes espoused in the Rome Statute have been codified in the Penal Code Act of 2010. Furthermore, the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act was enacted earlier this year. It is also important to highlight that the ICC implementation Bill is awaiting promulgation. These modest milestones demonstrate our commitment to our international obligations in ensuring the tenets of the Rome Statute become a permanent feature of our jurisprudence.

In a nutshell, Lesotho is committed to the ideals and objectives of the ICC. But, **Mr. President**, it would be remiss of me if I would not point out the concern which some African States Parties have on the way the ICC exercises its mandate. There is still a strong perception that this esteemed Court is not run fairly; that it is influenced by some non-State Parties, and as such to a large extent; that it is still perceived as targeting Africa.

These issues must continue to be addressed if the ICC is to earn global respect for the good work it is intended to do. The Court must endeavour to dispel such perceptions. Otherwise, it risks to be seen as a tool used by others to persecute African leaders, which will ultimately leave Africa with no choice but to seek other alternatives.

**Mr. President,**

Much remains to be done for the ICC to meet demands for justice in light of the increasing number of situations where international crimes are being committed. The ICC cannot deliver without our concerted support. We should always be mindful of the fact that the Rome Statute is a creature of our own making. Any imperfections can be addressed by none other than ourselves. It is in this spirit that Lesotho supports all efforts geared towards enhancement of the Rome Statute system.

My delegation places utmost importance on the continued fight against impunity in all its forms and manifestations. We acknowledge continued tribulations and triumphs the Court has faced over the years in the quest for sustainable peace, justice and a world free of impunity.

As States Parties, we should make additional efforts to project a unified message of our willingness to work together to defend the Court's mandate, its independence and the integrity of the Rome Statute. This will convey the urgency and seriousness with which the Assembly stands ready to confront threats to the Court's effective functioning.

In conclusion, **Mr. President**, the key priority of international criminal justice must always be to secure justice for the victims of serious atrocity crimes, and help prevent the future commission of such crimes. The pursuit of a sustainable peaceful world is an ideal that our forebears cherished. Our commitment to the fight against impunity and the maintenance of international peace and security, must always manifest in our actions in support of this international judicial architecture. History has taught us that no society, no nation, no region is immune to war, conflicts or atrocities.

**I thank you.**

