



**19th Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute
of the International Criminal Court**

The Hague, 14–16 December 2020

**Statement by
Minister of foreign affairs, Ine Eriksen Søreide**

Mr President, Excellencies, Colleagues,

It is a great privilege to address this Assembly on behalf of Norway.

Norway has been a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC) from the outset. The mission of the ICC is as crucial as ever. Norway will remain a consistent partner in the fight against impunity.

2020 has been a challenging year for us all, not least for the ICC. The Court has managed to maintain an impressive level of activity despite the pandemic. We would like to express our sincere appreciation of the dedicated work of all the Court officials and staff.

This year also saw the imposition of sanctions against Court officials and staff. This is unacceptable. Sanctions are a tool to be used against those responsible for the most serious crimes, not against those seeking justice. Norway stands firmly with the Court. We must continue to unite against any attempts to undermine the Court's independence.

The Court and the Rome Statute system have been subject to an independent expert review during this difficult time. If organisations are to thrive, they need to subject themselves to periodic review and reform. Only in this way can they build on their strengths for the future. And Norway wants to see a strong, effective and independent Court. Together with the other Nordic countries, Norway provided concrete suggestions for improvements under the expert review. This is a reflection of our keen interest in the well-being of the Court.

The independent experts have identified a number of shortcomings of the ICC and the Rome Statute system. The report shows that there is a widespread and urgent need for improvement.

We have 384 recommendations from the experts to consider. It is imperative that we as States Parties, and the Court, act on them.

The efficiency and independence of the Court will also be dependent on highly qualified, professional leadership.

When casting votes for six new judges, our overriding consideration should be on merit. This is key to promote a high-quality judiciary and ensure the legitimacy of the ICC.

We must also elect the highest qualified candidate as the next Prosecutor. It is important to select someone who has both extensive experience in handling complex criminal investigations and good managerial skills. The election must be transparent, non-political and merit-based.

Even before the election takes place, I assure the next Prosecutor that she or he can count on Norway's full support and cooperation. I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Prosecutor Bensouda for her tireless efforts to seek justice for atrocity crimes.

Mr President,

Let me conclude by reiterating Norway's strong commitment to the mission and mandate of the ICC. This year's Assembly takes place under challenging circumstances. We nevertheless look forward to productive discussions on how to strengthen our Court and the Rome Statute system.

Thank you.