



MINISTÉRIO DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

**NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES
PARTIES**

GENERAL DEBATE

Statement by

**Mr. Augusto Santos Silva
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs**

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Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to address today the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute.

Let me begin by thanking you, Mr President, for chairing the Assembly of States Parties during the past 3 years.

I would also like to show my appreciation to the outgoing judges and to the Prosecutor for their devoted service to the International Criminal Court, even when faced with many challenges and external pressures.

Mr. President,

The International Criminal Court plays a key role towards accountability for the most serious crimes that threaten the peace, security and well-being of the world, while bringing justice to victims.

The role of Court is much more than just a simple exercise of retribution:

- By investigating, the Court contributes to a reliable account of traumatic events.
- By prosecuting, the Court assures communities that the most basic human values endure.
- By merely existing, the Court tells the world that there is no other option than a society centred on the dignity of the human person and the promotion and protection of human rights.

With this in mind, Portugal has always been – and will continue to be – an unwavering supporter of the Court as an independent judicial institution. We are strongly committed to preserving the integrity and universality of the Rome Statute.

The independence of the International Criminal Court – of any Court – is crucial for the performance of its mandate and therefore measures that aim at threatening and questioning the work of this Court need to be withdrawn.

As any human institution, the Court is not perfect. However, we are confident that through a constructive dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders we will be able to address the challenges and to nourish the Court's accomplishments.

Portugal would like to commend the Independent Experts for their extensive and comprehensive Report on ways to strengthen the Court and the Rome Statute system in order to promote universal recognition of their central role in the global fight against impunity and enhance their overall functioning.

It is now the State Parties and the Court's turn to address those issues and assess the recommendations made by the Independent Experts. We must take joint action towards increasing the effectiveness of the ICC while maintaining a dialogue throughout the entire process.

Mr. President,

New judges and a new Prosecutor are scheduled to be elected at the present session. Their contribution will be fundamental to the crucial role the ICC needs to play in the international criminal justice system.

Portugal would like to express its satisfaction with the procedure for the nomination and election of judges. In our view, it has contributed to the transparency of the process itself and will contribute to the credibility of the Court.

Mr. President,

Let me end my statement by pledging once more the support of Portugal to the International Criminal Court. Portugal is committed to working with you and every delegation towards a successful session of the Assembly of States Parties.

Thank you, Mr. President.