

International Criminal Court
Twentieth Session of the Assembly of States Parties

Statement in the General Debate
by
AUSTRIA

Madame President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

In **2021**, too many **victims around the globe have once again suffered from atrocity crimes**.

In **Afghanistan**, the rise to power by the **Taliban** is a **threat to the lives and fundamental rights** of many – in **particular of women and girls**.

Against this background, the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** plays a key role in our message to the new rulers in Kabul which is:

The international community is watching you. There will be no impunity.

We all know that **sometimes it needs a long breath for justice to prevail**, but eventually it will.

Take the example of **Darfur**.

Austria welcomes that in April next year the trial against **former Janjaweed leader Ali Kusahaib** will commence – more than 15 years after the arrest warrant was issued.

But we also hope that **former President al-Bashir** will eventually be tried in The Hague.

Unfortunately, many situations remain outside the jurisdiction of the ICC, such as **Syria, Iraq or Yemen**. The recent escalation of violence in **Ethiopia** is particularly alarming.

We cannot let impunity rule.

Austria therefore calls for the **universal ratification of the Rome Statute**.

In addition, the **Security Council** should use its power to **refer conflict situations to the ICC**.

Such as the **horrendous crimes** committed in **Syria**.

The UN General Assembly has established the **International, Independent and Impartial Mechanism on Syria**. We are hopeful that the ICC will one day use the **evidence collected and preserved by this mechanism**.

At the same time, the Court is busier than ever, with new investigations in the **Philippines** and **Venezuela**.

Therefore, we welcome the Prosecutor's approach to **strengthen complementarity** to ensure that there is accountability, either at the **national** or **international** level.

And we **strongly support efforts** to elaborate a **convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity**.

We believe that such a **convention** based on the work of the **International Law Commission** would greatly **improve international cooperation** in order to **prosecute the perpetrators** of such crimes **at the domestic level**.

Within this Assembly, **Austria** also **remains** an **active State Party**. In this regard, we support the ongoing review process and welcome the bureau's decision to examine the **lessons learned from the Prosecutor's selection procedure**.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The ICC is much more than an institution. It is a **beacon** that shines a light on **the worst atrocities**. It answers the call of **victims** for justice.

The **Court** itself must lead by example and act with **absolute independence and impartiality**.

At the same time, **all States** and relevant stakeholders **must fully respect the ICC's independence** and **impartiality**.

Let me assure you that **Austria** will **continue to do its utmost to support the ICC** and to **strengthen the Rome Statute system**.

Thank you.