

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

**TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES
PARTIES**

GENERAL DEBATE

Statement by
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Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

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Madam President,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is with great honour that I once more address the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute.

I wish to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, as well as the new six judges and the Prosecutor for your election at the last session of this Assembly.

Portugal obviously shares the views expressed by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. I would like to further underline some particular issues of relevance to my country.

Madam President,

Next year, we will stand at this very Assembly and celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute and of the International Criminal Court as a fully operational Court.

The ICC is now an established institution. Its increasing level of activity is a testimony to that fact. Its role of making accountable those responsible for the most serious crimes of international concern and providing justice to victims of such crimes is of paramount importance, including for establishing the conditions for a sustainable peace in communities torn by conflict and wide-scale violence. The Court has been confronted with many adversities over the past years and new challenges are rising as it continues carrying out its mandate.

It is thus crucial that States remain undeterred in their support to the ICC and stay committed to having a comprehensive and constructive dialogue, while respecting the integrity and independence of the Court as a judicial institution.

Furthermore, States should continue their efforts to cooperate with the Court so that it may perform the role it has been given by all our countries.

Madam President,

As the ICC enters a new stage in its life, it is important that the Court and States Parties continue endeavouring to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

Therefore, Portugal praises the Review Process which is currently in progress and welcomes the efforts made both by the Court and States Parties to address the Report of the Independent Experts, specifically the recommendations contained therein.

We must continue taking joint action in this matter and maintain a dialogue between all relevant stakeholders throughout this process.

It is our belief that this process will lead, not only to an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Court, but also to a better overall perception of the ICC and of its fundamental role.

Madam President,

This session, the Assembly will elect new Deputy Prosecutors. They should be individuals of the highest quality, with a high moral character.

Portugal was encouraged by the fact that the process set in place for this election seemed to have drawn already from lessons-learnt from the last process for the election of the Prosecutor.

Madam President,

Portugal would like to reiterate its strong commitment to the International Criminal Court and to the values it represents. We will continue supporting its work as well as its independency.

Towards this end, it is my honour to inform this Assembly that on the 16th of May, Portugal deposited its instrument of ratification of the Amendment to Article 8 of the Rome Statute adopted in 2019, accepting that the intentional use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare constitutes a war crime also in non-international armed conflicts.

Madam President,

Allow me to conclude my statement by expressing Portugal's full commitment in working with you, Madam President, and the other delegations towards a successful twentieth session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute.

Thank you, Madam President.