

Statement by

H.E. Henry L. Mac Donald

**Head of Delegation
to the
Seventh Assembly of States Parties to
the Rome Statute of the
International Criminal Court**

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Thank you Mr. President,

I am deeply honoured and privileged to deliver this maiden statement to the Seventh Assembly of States Parties on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Suriname, who recently became the 107th State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Allow me to thank you, Mr. President and the Members of the Bureau for the important work done so far.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Representatives of the Court, in particular President Philippe Kirsch and Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo, as well as to the President of the Board of Directors of the Victims Trust Fund, Ms. Simone Veil, for their comprehensive reports, presented yesterday.

I would like to acknowledge the host country for providing us with the necessary infrastructure to facilitate constructive deliberations and working conditions in the pursuit of international peace and justice, in particular criminal justice.

We look forward to productive deliberations during this Seventh Assembly of States Parties and pledge our full support and cooperation in this regard. Furthermore, I would like to reiterate the determination of Suriname to engage constructively in the work on the further development and functioning of the Court.

Mr. President,

The international community continues to be confronted with the most serious crimes threatening peace, security and the well-being of the world. This Court therefore stands as the willpower of the international community in upholding the principles of justice and equality before the law, since it provides a reassurance to those victims who were stripped of their rights, property and dignity.

Some have predicted that it would take decades to obtain the necessary ratifications for the entry into force of the Rome Statute and the Court to be fully created. Despite this skepticism it is noteworthy of mention that this important milestone was reached in a relatively short period of 4 years after signing of the Statute in 2002.

Suriname was pleased to participate in the activities to mark the tenth anniversary of the Rome Statute, held at the United Nations Headquarters this July. We were proud to have joined others in underscoring the significance of an international, permanent, judicial, independent, and non-political institution to bring an end to impunity by holding accountable those individuals accused of committing heinous crimes against humanity, in cases where the national criminal jurisdiction is not able or not willing to do so.

In Suriname we went through an elaborative process of national consultations before acceding to the Statute. Therefore, the adoption of domestic legislative procedure to become a State Party to the Rome Statute was done unanimously in our Parliament. During the discussions in parliament it was also noted, that additional legislative measures are to be taken in order to fulfill our obligations as a state-party to the Rome Statute.

In Suriname the legislators responsible for drafting legislative measures for practical cooperation and jurisdiction issues with the International Criminal Court, will employ the principle of complementarity of the crimes as mentioned in the Rome Statute. Furthermore, the existing national legislation will be amended if necessary.

Several persons were instrumental in the national awareness raising campaign and it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the sterling efforts of Dr. Ruth Wijdenbosch, Member of Parliament in this regard.

Mr. President,

Even though my country joined the Rome Statute just very recently, it is of the considered view that for the full and effective implementation of the Court's mandate it is important for the Court to reach universality and in this regard we will continue to support the call to those Member States of the United Nations who have not yet done so, to consider acceding to the Rome Statute

Of equal importance is the cooperation of States Parties with the Court. If we are to address the elimination of the culture of impunity, and guarantee a culture of accountability, justice and the rule of law, it is imperative that States Parties, mindful of their obligations under the Statute, fully support the Court to do whatever is lawfully needed to bring justice to those victims who have placed their lives in our hands.

Suriname, for its part, upon the request of the Court, will certainly provide its contribution.

International organizations and civil society have demonstrated to make a positive contribution towards the effective and independent implementation of the Court's mandate. The important contributions of individuals throughout the world, in their plight for human rights and justice, did not go unnoticed.

The Caribbean region, of which Suriname is part of, has played a critical role in the development of the ICC. In this regard I would like to make particular reference to the commitment and determination shown by the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Arthur N. Robinson.

At this juncture it is also appropriate to recall the nomination by Guyana of Justice Mohammed Shahabbudeen for election as a judge to the ICC, which already enjoys the endorsement of the Caribbean Community and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

In January 2009, at the resumed Seventh Assembly of States Parties, Suriname, for the first time, will be in a position to help elect the most qualified jurists and scholars as judges to the Court and we look forward to exercising this responsibility mindful of the requirements of the Statute.

Mr. President,

We have joined others of the international community who support the goal of ending impunity and the principle of equality before the law. In this regard we will continuously advocate our principled position to fully protect the integrity of the Statute.

We are satisfied that this has contributed to the decision of the United States Congress and Administration to substantially modify its legislation and policies with respect to the decision of its partners to participate in the ICC system.

In closing Mr. President, Suriname remains deeply committed to the very principles and ideals of this Court, the establishment of which we recognize as a major and necessary contribution to the further development of international law.

Allow me to once again reiterate our willingness to remain engaged in the work of the Court as we continue the cause to end impunity and reinforce the respect for the rule of law.

I thank you kindly for your attention.