

Eighth Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute  
Statement by Mr. George Talbot,  
Head of the delegation of the Republic of Guyana  
November 20, 2009

Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of Guyana, I have the honour to address a few remarks on the occasion of this eighth session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

First, I wish to underline the importance that Guyana attaches to the role and work of the ICC. The Court, in our view, represents a significant advance in the collective effort to construct an international order based on the rule of law. The consolidation of such an order is of paramount importance to the maintenance of international peace and security and particularly so for the security of small states such as our own. The Court also makes a seminal contribution to the creation of an international regime that abjures impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of international concern. Its retributive and punitive aspects are complemented by its preventive and deterrent dimensions.

Secondly, I wish to convey Guyana's recognition of the achievements made by the Court in the relatively short time of its existence. One hundred and ten countries, nearly 60 per cent of the membership of the United Nations, have become Parties to the Statute. We welcome Chile and the Czech Republic as the newest States Parties and look forward to the contribution they will make out of the wealth of their respective experiences. The Court is now fully functional but yet in the early days in the development of its judicial experience and jurisprudence. To command the respect and confidence it needs to function effectively, the judicial independence of the Court will have to be safeguarded and it will be obliged at all times to act above reproach. In this context, we are encouraged by the priority objectives outlined by the President of the Court and by the efforts of the Prosecutor to discharge the important mandate entrusted to him by the Statute. The cooperation of States is essential to the effective execution of the Court's mandate. Guyana stands ready to fulfil its obligations in that regard and we are open to learning from the experience of others, including fellow States Parties of the Caribbean Community.

This Assembly of States Parties also has an important role in contributing to the integrity of the Court by ensuring the integrity of its own processes; remaining open, transparent and inclusive, and ensuring that all voices are heard and taken into account. We congratulate you, Mr. President, on the excellent leadership that you are providing in this regard and salute the valuable work undertaken by your predecessors.

Guyana is pleased that the Court now has a full bench of judges as it engages in the task of dispensing justice in the most serious crimes of international concern. We take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi of Argentina and Judge Kuniko Ozaki of Japan on their election and wish them every success in their tenure.

Thirdly, Mr. President, I wish to share briefly Guyana's reflexions on the review process that will culminate in Kampala next year. We were pleased to have supported Kampala as the venue for the review conference. We did so, conscious of the strong commitment that African countries have demonstrated to the Court and the special meaning the Court has for Africa at this stage. However, as history has shown, no country or continent or people has a monopoly on the perpetration of crimes that shock the human conscience. Nor does any a monopoly on the means of dispensing appropriate justice and remedy in such instances! We must therefore work together, collectively and cooperatively, to banish impunity and to ensure that humanity's worst instincts are kept at bay. It is a near impossible task but one from which we cannot shrink. The Court is an essential instrument in this endeavour. The Review Conference offers an important opportunity to examine the progress made and determine how this instrument can be perfected to perform its vital function.

In this regard, my delegation has taken note of the various proposals for amendment to the Statute that have been submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General. We believe that each proposal should be considered on its merit in light of the Statute, and the purpose and needs of the Court, with a view to determining the scope and focus of the work of the Review Conference itself.

Finally, we agree on the need to give priority to defining the crime of aggression and setting out the conditions under which the Court shall exercise jurisdiction with respect to this crime, in keeping with articles 121 and 123 of the Statute. We are aware that certain tensions accompany this process which need to be resolved if the purpose and work of the Court are to be advanced. It is Guyana's hope that a resolution can be found that is faithful to the Charter of the United Nations and to the provisions of the Rome Statute such that the imperatives of peace and justice are not overborne by other considerations.

Mr. President, I thank you.