

STATEMENT BY HON. FREDRICK RUHINDI, DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS TO THE 8TH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT, NOVEMBER 2009

Mr. President, it is my pleasure to address this 8th session of the Assembly of States Parties of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

First, allow me to commend you on the excellent manner in which you have been conducting the affairs of the Assembly of States Parties since you were elected in this position. I would like to assure you of my delegation's continued support as you steer the work of the Assembly.

We congratulate Judge Song upon being elected President of the Court and wish him success in his endeavours to strengthen the Court. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Judge Silvia Fernandez de Gurmendi from Argentina and Judge KUNIKO OZAKI from Japan upon their well deserved election to the Court in the elections that were held yesterday.

Mr. President, allow me to pass on my delegation's condolences to the people and Government of Japan upon the untimely loss of Judge Fumiko Saiga.

Mr. President, Uganda's special relationship with the Court started at the foot of the Seven Hills of Rome during the diplomatic conference in 1998. In 2002 when the Rome Statute came into force, Uganda ratified. It is fitting that seven years later, all roads are now leading to the seven hills of Kampala for the Review Conference in 2010 which will be another milestone of the Rome Statute.

The Rome Statute is steadily marching on the road to universality. Accordingly we welcome the most recent entrants Chile and the Czech Republic whose ratification of the

Rome Statute has brought the total membership to 110. We call on other States which have not done so to consider ratifying the Rome Statute so that the fight against impunity for the most heinous crimes can be jointly waged by all States worldwide. We believe that the Review Conference offers an excellent opportunity to receive and recognize more States Parties.

In December 2003, Uganda made the first ever State referral to the Court, in the situation involving the infamous Lord's Resistance Army; and in 2010, Uganda shall host the first ever Review Conference.

Another unprecedented effort has been for three neighbouring African countries namely the armies of the DRC, Southern Sudan and Uganda to launch a joint operation in the areas where the LRA were based. This effort complements the efforts of the Court in pursuit of Joseph Kony and his terrorist group.

As we have stated before, the involvement of the Court in the search for justice for the people of northern Uganda has been a major development whose positive impact is obvious to all. Unfortunately Joseph Kony and his fellow indictees are still on the run oscillating between Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and the Central African Republic where they continue to commit atrocities, and further victimizing innocent women and children.

We attach great value to the principle of complementarity to which the Prosecutor referred in his address yesterday and to this end the Government of Uganda has established a special division of the High Court with jurisdiction over the most serious crimes of international concern. The Chief Registrar, Her Worship Flavia Anglin is here with us and available to provide more details as you may require.

Mr. President,

Since the last Assembly of States Parties major developments have taken place. Uganda has since ratified the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the International

Criminal Court. In addition the International Criminal Court Bill is now in advanced stages of being enacted by Parliament. Consultations with all the stakeholders have been concluded and it is hoped that the Bill will be passed before the end of the year. The Bill is before the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee whose Chairman, Honorable Stephen Tashobya, is here with us.

Mr. President, allow me to once again thank this Assembly for the decision of 20th November 2008 which granted Uganda the opportunity of hosting the Review Conference. The Government and people of Uganda are extremely grateful and are looking forward to demonstrating to you their gratitude in traditional hospitality. I wish to state that the holding of the Review Conference in Kampala provides an excellent opportunity for the Court to be even better understood by the many victims who are the primary stakeholders.

Mr. President, allow me update you on how we are progressing in preparation for the much-anticipated Review Conference. Since January 2009, a National Organizing Committee, coordinated and chaired by my Ministry (of Justice and Constitutional Affairs), has been spearheading and coordinating the preparations and through its activities, a lot of progress has been registered. Negotiations regarding the Host State Agreement are ongoing and we are confident that they will soon be concluded. I wish to report that visas will be issued on arrival and fees have been waived for all delegates. In addition, special hotel rates are being negotiated.

Mr. President, I wish to further report that my Ministry has engaged the Coalition of International Criminal Court-Uganda Chapter with a view to generating ideas on how to ensure that civil society fully participates in the Conference and in this context, the Government of Uganda has agreed to avail a 'Peoples' Space' at the Conference venue which shall provide a forum for interaction between civil society and other stakeholders.

Mr. President, in addition, the Parliament of Uganda is preparing to host over 200 members of the Parliamentarians for Global Action who will be attending the

Conference. I also wish to inform the Assembly that shuttles will be put in place to transport delegates from the airport to their respective hotels. Starting from January 2010, a special Focal Point Office shall be in place under my Ministry to exclusively handle all and any matters pertaining to the preparatory process on a day-to-day basis. The office shall have a website linked to that of the Secretariat of the Assembly where anyone interested in information on the organizational aspects of the Conference shall access it. This is meant to ensure that the preparatory process receives undivided attention and that there is a smooth communication channel between Kampala and The Hague.

Mr. President, Uganda truly understands the significance of the Review Conference and the magnitude of the responsibility that has been placed in our hands. In this regard, the Government of Uganda is doing, and will do everything possible to make the Review Conference a success. My delegation hopes that this session will determine the duration of the Review Conference in order to facilitate the smooth planning of a successful event.

We eagerly await the outcome of this Assembly so that there is clarity on the issues to be discussed in Kampala. We hope that members will be flexible on the issue of proposals. Stocktaking is an element that requires a substantial amount of time which we hope will be granted by this Assembly. A careful reflection of international criminal justice would strengthen the direction of the Court in the fight against impunity. We welcome the participation of all States Parties at the highest level, and my delegation is happy to note that some delegations will be led by Heads of State and government.

Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to extend a hand of welcome to you all to Kampala, States Parties, non-States Parties alike, and all stakeholders in the fight against impunity, and to assure you of a conducive atmosphere within which to accomplish the tasks at hand. We will continue to do everything possible to ensure that your stay in “THE PEARL OF AFRICA” is fruitful and memorable as well.

Thank you for your kind attention.

