

Statement by New Zealand to the Review Conference of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

Mr President,

Let me begin by commending the International Criminal Court for all that it has achieved since the Rome Statute entered into force. Few, if any, of us would have predicted that the Court would have accomplished so much by the time of this Review Conference. The Court is fully operational, with two trials under way and a third about to commence. The pre-trial and appeals divisions of the Court are managing significant caseloads, and are developing an impressive jurisprudence.

The Office of the Prosecutor, in addition to its trial work, is heavily engaged in progressing a range of investigations. Equally, the Registry is undertaking a range of activities across the full spectrum of the Court's operations, including in the crucial areas of ensuring effective rights of defence, supporting witnesses and victims, and undertaking a range of outreach activities. These are substantial accomplishments, of which all concerned may be justly proud.

Mr President,

This Review Conference is a critical milestone for the Rome Statute system of international criminal justice. It is our first opportunity since Rome to re-commit to the vital goal of achieving universalisation of the Statute. Only universal ratification of the Rome Statute will eliminate impunity, and deny a safe haven to the perpetrators of the world's most egregious crimes.

For its part, New Zealand is committed to outcomes that will strengthen the Court's role as the primary institution within the international criminal justice system. In particular, New Zealand recognises the critical importance of cooperation, including the swift enforcement of pending arrest warrants, to the future success of the Court. We hope that this Review Conference will galvanise such efforts, and we strongly support the work being undertaken on this issue by the cooperation focal points.

Mr President,

We see the stocktaking sessions of this Conference as being of special importance in assessing both the achievements of international criminal justice, and the challenges that lie ahead. In particular, we welcome the excellent work being undertaken in respect of the impact of the Rome Statute system on affected communities and victims, and with regard to the dual goals of global peace and justice. We look forward to engaging with States and civil society about these issues over the days ahead.

Further, New Zealand continues to be a strong supporter of the work being undertaken by the focal points on complementarity. We particularly welcome measures that will improve the capacity of national jurisdictions to prosecute the most serious international crimes. We also look forward to joining with others in making pledges that reaffirm our collective commitment to the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court. New Zealand pledges to encourage ratification of the Rome Statute in the Asia Pacific region, and to liaise with the Commonwealth Secretariat and others to identify suitable opportunities for us to support accession and implementation activities.

Looked at collectively, we believe that the stocktaking work programme will make a lasting contribution to international criminal justice, and to further strengthening both the Court and the communities it serves.

Mr President,

Turning to the crime of aggression negotiations, substantial progress has been made in recent years with the definition of aggression. While only one component of these complex negotiations, the work of the Special Working Group on the definition is a significant achievement in its own right.

New Zealand approaches these negotiations on the basis that the final outcome must achieve the primary goals of strengthening the Court and implementing the principles of the Rome Statute. While difficult issues remain, we undertake to do our utmost to achieve an outcome that meets those objectives.

New Zealand will engage in negotiations about the other proposed amendments to the Statute on the same basis.

Mr President,

We express our gratitude to the Government and people of Uganda for their gracious hospitality. We also record our appreciation of the fact that this Conference represents the fruit of a great deal of work by the secretariat and many others.

States, the Court, and non-governmental organisations can take pride in what has been achieved since Rome. But we must not be complacent. Much more remains to be done if we are to bring an end to impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern. We all have a part to play in achieving this common goal in the course of the coming days.

For its part, New Zealand will do its very best to help make the Review Conference a success.