

**INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
SEVENTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES
PARTIES TO THE ROME STATUTE**

THE HAGUE, 15 NOVEMBER 2008

STATEMENT MADE ON BEHALF OF

THE REPUBLIC OF

UGANDA

BY AMBASSADOR MIRJAM BLAAK

DEPUTY HEAD OF MISSION

UGANDA EMBASSY BRUSSELS

Mr. President, Honourable Members of the Court,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President,

My delegation is pleased to see you preside over this Seventh Session of the Assembly of States Parties. We are confident that with your experience and diplomatic skills, you will steer our proceedings to a successful conclusion. I assure you, Mr. President, of my delegations' full cooperation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing President, H.E. Bruno Stagno Ugarte for his outstanding leadership.

Mr. President,

Allow me to address the President of the Court, Mr. Philip Kirsch. We highly appreciate the role you played in Rome and the way in which you have managed to make this Court a formidable institution of international criminal justice. We wish you success in your future endeavours.

Mr. President,

Furthermore I would like to express my appreciation to all members of the ICC for the accomplishments achieved in the past years and I would like to recognize the many challenges that the office faces in pursuing its mandate

My delegation aligns itself with the Statement that was made on behalf of the African Group.

At the outset, permit me to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Uganda to the ideals of a strong, impartial and effective ICC. This commitment remains unwavering as in the past, today and in the future.

I would like to reiterate the support of the Uganda Government to the ICC and state categorically that Uganda does not condone impunity. We appreciate the important role the ICC is playing in bringing about peace in northern Uganda. We have now reached a state of relative peace but this will only be sustainable when the problem of the LRA has been resolved. Joseph Kony and the LRA took refuge in northern Congo in fear of the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) which had hunted them down in efforts to arrest and hand them over to the ICC.

I would like to inform the Assembly about the developments in Northern Uganda. Since the Government of Uganda commenced the peace talks in June 2006 peace has returned to all parts of Uganda. The Internally Displaced Persons Camps have almost all been emptied. In the Acholi sub-region 85% of Ugandans have returned home while in the Lango region almost all displaced persons are back home and are engaged in productive activities.

To date out of the original five suspects indicted by the Court, two of them have been confirmed dead namely Raska Lukwiya and Vincent Otti. The Government of Uganda has now offered the LRA/LRM until 30 November 2008 to sign the already concluded final peace agreement

If the agreement is not signed by Kony by 30 November 2008 and followed by implementation then we appeal to all States Parties to urgently cooperate and execute the warrants of arrest. Kony and the LRA are currently holed up in northern DRC in the Garamba forest and its surroundings where the Ugandan armed forces are not allowed to operate.

We fail to understand the reluctance of those who have the means, capacity and mandate to deal with the LRA effectively and to end this situation once and for all.

Moreover, we have information that the LRA is currently attacking the civilian population in the DRC committing many of the same crimes for which they are currently charged.

I am pleased to announce that our Cabinet has approved the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Court (APIC), a copy of which I have here, Mr. President, and that instrument of ratification will shortly be deposited in New York. The ICC Bill is presently under consideration in Parliament and is expected to be passed into law.

Uganda's offer to host the Review Conference in 2010 provides further opportunity to enhance the visibility of the Court in the region. If there was any doubt at Uganda's capacity to host this Review Conference, Mr. President, then I would like to inform this Assembly that in May this year when the fact finding team visited Uganda, they came to the conclusion: to quote the words of a famous person "Yes we can". Uganda is a favourable venue for the conference.

We welcome the overwhelming support extended to Uganda's offer and we hope that during this session a decision will be made to endorse Uganda as the venue for the Review Conference. We are looking forward to welcoming you to Uganda, also known as "the Pearl of Africa", the words used by another famous politician, Sir Winston Churchill in "My African Journey".

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to reaffirm Uganda's commitment to the fight against impunity. Thank you.
