

Lord Ahmad speech: [pre-recorded] remarks for ICC Assembly of States Parties, 5-10 December 2022 (634 words, approx. 5 mins)

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates. I welcome this opportunity to address the Assembly on behalf of the Government of the United Kingdom. I pass on the best wishes of, and a message of support from, the Foreign Secretary.

On its creation the ICC was described by the then UN Secretary-General as a giant step forward in the march towards universal human rights and the rule of law. It was a watershed moment in international justice, intended to help tackle the culture of impunity that characterises so many armed conflicts.

A court of last resort, the ICC was to be ready to take action when a country could not, or would not, investigate and prosecute those alleged to have committed international crimes.

The UK remains committed to this vision.

We remain determined that the Court should be an effective means of ensuring that all victims of the most serious international crimes have access to justice.

And we remain determined that all would-be-perpetrators know that they can, and will, be held to account for their actions.

Since the ICC's establishment we have seen notable successes in situations under the Court's purview. The UK has been proud to support the work of the Court. In addition to contributing to the annual budget, we enforce sentences, we protect witnesses, and we are proud to support the work of the Trust Fund for Victims.

It was as a great supporter of the ICC that in 2018, the UK, along with other like-minded States Parties, called for action to reform and strengthen the Court.

We therefore welcomed the establishment of the Independent Expert Review, recognising that the Court could improve in a number of

fundamental areas, from leadership to efficiency, from working culture to expertise.

The resulting report was the basis for a process for strengthening the Court. We thank the Court and the Review Mechanism team for taking this work forward. And we also welcome the progress that has been made. However, important work still remains to be done.

Despite, indeed, because of, the many pressures the ICC faces, now is not the time to step back. This year we look forward to a focus on the implementation of key recommendations, building on the improvements already made. This will be crucial to continue strengthening the Court.

We look forward also to action to ensure the introduction of an effective and practical tenure policy at the Court.

These steps will allow us all to continue to build a more effective and efficient ICC that is best placed to deliver justice for victims.

This objective is one that remains timely and relevant.

Russia's brutal, illegal, and unjustified invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent, overwhelming evidence of atrocities against the civilian population, including allegations of sexual violence has once again brought into sharp focus the need for accountability and justice and the role of the international community in holding perpetrators to account.

The Foreign Secretary and I welcome the Court's work in investigating these allegations, and the ICC's ongoing work to ensure all victims have access to justice, wherever crimes take place within the Court's jurisdiction.

Since its creation, the ICC has been instrumental in ensuring that impunity is not the default. That is a role I know the Court will continue to play. It is an institution we are proud to support.

In that regard, it is only right to end this statement by paying homage to a pillar of this institution – the Registrar Peter Lewis – who steps down next year after 5 years of distinguished service. The United Kingdom thanks the Registrar for his excellent stewardship of the Court – often

through trying and difficult times – and wishes him well in whatever comes next. We look forward to supporting the next Registrar to carry on the good work.

Thank you.