

Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Wopke Hoekstra, at the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court, 5 December 2022

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by addressing Mr Peter Lewis, the ICC Registrar, who has successfully guided the Court through some difficult moments over the last five years.

Your mandate ends next year, and I'm sure I speak for everyone here when I say: we'll be sad to see you go, and thank you for your service.

Your Excellencies,

After a tragedy, we often say 'never forget', or 'never again'.

These phrases express our sense of loss, anger and sorrow.

But these phrases alone won't bring justice.

That is why, almost 25 years ago in Rome, the international community went beyond these words, and adopted the Rome Statute.

In 2002 it entered into force, and established the institution that brings us together today. A court where the worst criminals have to answer for the most egregious crimes.

This year we marked the ICC's 20th anniversary and we can look back on a number of remarkable successes over the years.

The Court has firmly established itself as an indispensable pillar in the global fight against impunity.

The number of States Parties has more than doubled from 60 to 123, and both the number of investigations and their global reach have expanded.

International commitment to developing and strengthening the Rome Statute system is growing – slowly, yes, but surely.

Many States Parties have introduced major reforms to their domestic criminal law.

This has significantly improved their ability to try suspects of international crimes in national courts, in line with the principle of complementarity.

Next year, in Slovenia, we hope to adopt a new convention that will further strengthen international cooperation on the investigation and prosecution of core international crimes.

At a time when the most fundamental legal norms are being blatantly violated – most visibly in Ukraine – these are hopeful steps.

But in order to effectively fight impunity, I believe we must take several more.

The first is to improve cooperation and coordination between the Court and States Parties. For a start, states should promptly execute outstanding arrest warrants – this is an obligation under the Rome Statute.

Second, states can do more to contribute to the effective and efficient functioning of the Court. For instance by concluding framework agreements to cooperate voluntarily with the Court on witness relocation, the transfer of persons upon completion of their sentence, and enforcing sentences.

And third, States parties must provide the Court with an adequate budget, and support the Court by paying their contributions.

This is the only way to ensure that the ICC can remain financially sustainable and carry out its mandate.

The Court can count on the unwavering support of the Netherlands.

I call on all States Parties to help the ICC take the next steps on the road to ending impunity.

Thank you.
