

Excellencies, fellow justice advocates, good afternoon.

I come from a situation country, the Philippines. To thwart the process of the ICC starting with the preliminary examination then announced by the Prosecutor in 2018, the then President of the Philippines withdrew from the Rome Statute, which took effect on 17 March 2019.

Since then, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights submitted a report on the human rights situation in the Philippines pursuant to a Resolution of the UN Human Rights Council, there is an authorization to commence an investigation of crimes against humanity in the context of the so-called “war on drugs” campaign albeit a deferral request by the Philippines, and there is an ongoing UN Joint Program on Human Rights to provide technical assistance to the Philippines to address the justice and accountability issues.

In the meantime, victims and their families of the war on drugs remain waiting for justice to actually happen. The ICC has given them hope that justice will find its way to them soon. But the road to such attainment of justice must be clear and not be seen as merely illusory.

The issue of resources for the ICC has been a perennial one. But it is a real concern for situation countries, especially for thousands of victims placing their hopes on the ICC to get the justice that they deserve. From our experience, thousands of victims are waiting for the process of the ICC investigation to begin; it is their vision of hope for justice.

But although participation is theoretically made available at the different stages of the proceedings, information of when and how they can do so mainly from civil society actors who actively seek out and bring the information to the victims or their families themselves. We recognize that the reach of the organs of the ICC is limited due to resources available and capacity to reach out. But this in itself goes against the very notion that the victims must be at the core of the ICC system; the unfortunate reality is that not only are they at a loss as to what to expect and the next steps given the limited reach of information if not the lack thereof, more concerning are the security risks they continuously face in relying on the system which, at the same time, may leave them exposed and vulnerable.

We have often heard that justice delayed is justice denied. Justice for many victims we represent have already been denied at the domestic level. With hope and reliance on an international justice system, the credibility of the ICC depends on its responsiveness to deliver justice and protect the victims and their families in their quest for justice. Resources must simply be made available to the Court to ensure its success.