

Madam President,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am most honored to address the twenty-first Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

I wish to begin by stating that Portugal shares the views earlier expressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, my dear colleague *Jan Lipavský*, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Nevertheless, I would like to underline some aspects relevant to my country.

Portugal would also like to commend the President of the Assembly, the President of the Court, the Prosecutor and the Deputy Prosecutors elected during the last sessions of this Assembly and express our sincere recognition for their valuable contribution to the work of the International Criminal Court.

Madam President,

In light of the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute that we are celebrating this year, it is timely to critically examine the achievements and challenges of the ICC.

It is worth recalling that, when established back in 2002, the International Criminal Court was called "the most ambitious initiative in the history of modern international law". Today we urge this Assembly to restate our collective ambition and express our unwavering support for the pivotal role

that the ICC plays towards accountability for the most serious crimes that, regrettably, continue to threaten the peace, security, and well-being of the world.

Madam President,

As the world's permanent international criminal court, the ICC represents a historic achievement of humankind. It plays a central role in the fight against impunity, bringing justice to victims, and in the prevention of the commission of atrocity crimes, contributing, in a very significant way, to the advancement of the rule of law, and stable, peaceful societies.

In this vein, we must continue to actively work together towards the universality of the Rome Statute, and the strengthening of the international criminal justice system, alongside other accountability mechanisms and national prosecutions.

Madam President,

The Assembly of States Parties is the right forum to collectively discuss additional and more efficient forms of cooperation and to seek to improve the decision-making processes and ultimate impact of the Court's work to accomplish its mandate.

Portugal is committed to working with you and with every delegation towards a successful session of the Assembly of State Parties.

Recent and ongoing events in Ukraine have more than shown us the need for a strong ICC and for all States to cooperate with the Court. Without

such cooperation, the Court will not be able to carry out the mandate it was given by the Rome Statute.

In this context, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to continuing supporting the work of the Office of the Prosecutor, including by providing national experts on a secondment basis to support such work.

Let me end my statement by pledging once again the support of Portugal to the work of the International Criminal Court, and by calling all States to keep the same ambition that was present at its inception, back in 2002, towards a more peaceful and fairer world.

Thank you, Madam President.