



**Government Offices of Sweden**

**STATEMENT**

**by**

**Mr Tobias Billström**

**Minister for Foreign Affairs**

**At the General Debate**

**21<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute**

**The Hague**

**5 December 2022**

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden**

**Madam President,**

I am honoured to address the Assembly of States Parties. Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Allow me first to express my sincere appreciation to the Court and all its officials. Your work continues to make significant contributions to ensure accountability for perpetrators of the most serious crimes and justice for victims.

I would in particular like to thank the Registrar, Mr Peter Lewis, as he reaches the end of his five-year term at the ICC. We commend his relentless work for the effective functioning of the Court, his tireless efforts towards gender equality and a better working environment at the Court.

Civil society organisations were instrumental in the creation of the Court, almost 25 years ago, and they continue to be crucial for the Court and its States Parties. It goes without saying that threats and intimidation directed at civil society organizations cooperating with the Court are unacceptable.

**Madam President,**

Sweden has been a steadfast supporter of the International Criminal Court since its establishment. The fight against impunity is integral to a rules-based international order and the ICC is the key institution in this quest for accountability.

Only a truly universal court can fulfil its mandate completely. We urge all States that have not yet ratified the Rome Statute to do so, to give victims everywhere access to justice.

I am pleased to announce that Sweden early this year deposited the instruments of acceptance of the Kampala amendments, including the crime of aggression.

**Madam President,**

The Court is faced with an unprecedented workload, as it is currently active in 16 situations. In early March, Sweden was one of 39 States Parties that referred the situation in Ukraine to the Prosecutor, who promptly proceeded to open an investigation that encompasses any past and present allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed from 21 November 2013 onwards.

During the year, a number of States Parties, including Sweden, have also provided the Office of the Prosecutor with voluntary financial contributions and seconded personnel. It is important to underline that these contributions are not earmarked solely for one specific situation but should be seen as an exceptional measure to assist the Court in fulfilling its mandate.

The Court can only fulfill its mandate if we put it on a long-term sustainable financial footing. We call on all States Parties to pay their contributions in full and on time. Late or unpaid contributions severely hamper the work of the Court, prolong investigations and trials and delay justice for victims.

**Madam President,**

The Trust Fund for Victims is a cornerstone of reparative justice for the victims of the most serious crimes. I am proud to say that Sweden has been the largest contributor to the Fund, with total contributions of approximately 3 million euros during the last three years. However, this is not enough. The Fund depends on voluntary contributions to fulfil its mandate. We call on others to join in contributing to its important work.

**Madam President,**

States' full cooperation with the Court is essential for its ability to carry out its mandate. Witnesses must receive protection; outstanding arrest warrants must be promptly executed, and States Parties must share the burden of enforcement of sentences. Sweden stands ready to share its experiences of relocating witnesses with other interested States Parties.

**Madam President,**

The Review Process of the Rome Statute system is still ongoing. Many of the recommendations of the independent experts have been assessed and implemented over the past two years. We salute the considerable work and significant achievements of the Court in this regard, and welcome further efforts to enhance the governance and management of the Court, including its working culture.

We must continue to engage in this process and work together for the benefit of a stronger, more efficient, and more resilient Court and Rome Statute system.

**Madam President,**

The ICC was established to prevent and investigate the most serious crimes, regardless of who commits them. The Court's heavy workload, which is a reflection of the dire times we live in, shows how much we need it.

We look forward to working constructively with all States Parties, officials of the Court and members of the civil society to achieve a successful outcome of this Assembly, under your able leadership, Madam President.

I thank you.