

Statement of DANIEL OKELLO
COORDINATOR LIRA NGO FORUM, UGANDA
At the 11TH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE ROME
STATUTE,
THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS, 12-22 NOVEMBER 2012

Dear delegates and distinguished guests, I am Daniel Okello, Coordinator of Lira NGO Forum, based in Northern Uganda. We are a member of the Coalition for the ICC and Ugandan National Coalition for the ICC.

The Assembly of State Parties (ASP) has been meeting every year since 2002, after states made history by securing the 60th ratification of the Rome Statute, which set into motion the creation of the International Criminal Court. This Court has the aim of ending to impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of international concern to the international community as a whole, and thus to contribute to the prevention of such crimes.

Today is the 11th successive meeting of ASP, a gathering of states parties, who have signed and ratified the Rome Statute. It is an opportunity for these states parties to show their commitment to the court and fulfill their legal obligations when required.

I come from northern Uganda; the situation in northern Uganda was the first situation to be referred to the ICC on December 16, 2003 by the government of Uganda to the ICC. I feel honored as a person to be here but also wish all the millions of victims I have left back home in Uganda could be here to appeal to you all to work for justice for the world including the LRA war victims, some of whom are still looking for their loves ones among the dead and the living to have a lasting peace for the innocent children, women and men, young and old.

Victims in northern Uganda have many concerns and questions to ask states parties including;

1. Will we get peace earned from justice?

2. Has the LRA defeated the International Criminal Court?
3. ICC equals the wealth and armies of all the state parties, why have they failed to arrest a mere five people and take them to The Hague?
4. Who attends the ASP meetings and what do they accomplish there?
5. Do they discuss strategies of how to arrest the LRA commanders and take them to the ICC for trials?

Another concern is that 7 years after the ICC issued arrest warrants for the LRA commanders, there is information that the court wants to pull out from Uganda, the field activities of the court in Uganda has been drastically reduced, the outreach division of the court has only one national staff, the activities of the TFV are not seen on the ground but can be found only in reports of the court.

The situation has resulted in a feeling of desperation and hopelessness among the victims, there is great need to harness the work so far done on the ground and the impact/hope created in the victims in 2003 when the LRA commander left Northern Uganda after they were indicted. We want to keep the hope of victims alive, preaching the word of justice and peace, but it becomes difficult because justice delayed is justice denied,

To date the LRA is still at large and is committing the same atrocities they committed in northern Uganda in the neighboring countries causing regional insecurity and human suffering for civilians in DRC, CAR, South Sudan and Sudan.

I would call upon all states parties to the ICC, including those who are also member states of the African Union countries to cooperate with the court in arresting and surrendering the LRA commanders to the ICC.

In addition, I would like to urge states parties from Africa who made pledges at the Kampala review conference to fulfill their pledges.

I wish to conclude by appealing to all states parties to the ICC, to work for the interest of the victims of war crimes, Africa is divided into many regional bodies, but let's learn from

ECOWAS's call for the ICC to intervene in Mali, and SADC's support for the ICC in Addis Ababa. These and other opportunities are aimed at protecting the integrity of the Rome Statute of the ICC.