



Speech delivered on 21 November 2013

THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Assembly of States Parties, The Hague, 20-21 November 2013

Intervention by Ms Christina Olsen

Secretary to the CAHDI
Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law
Council of Europe

Madam President,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to represent the Council of Europe before this eminent Assembly. As an intergovernmental organisation committed to the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the Council of Europe has followed with interest the developments of the International Criminal Court (ICC) since its inception. More than 10 years after the entry into force of the Rome Statute, the Council of Europe continues to look upon the Court as a fundamental player on the international plane committed to defending human rights and ultimately, fostering peace by delivering justice. My presence today amidst you intends to bear witness to this continuing mark of respect and confidence.

The Council of Europe is an observer to the Assembly of States Party to the Rome Statute. From the outset, I should like to offset any impression that this status may create as to a merely passive role played by our Organisation with respect to the Court. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to say that more than an observer, the Council of Europe has been throughout the years a “doer”, as it undertook concrete actions embodying its support for the Court.

First, at a political level, both statutory organs of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly have on a number of occasions voiced their commitment towards the Court.

Furthermore, at a technical level, in an effort to expedite the ratification process of the Rome Statute, the Council of Europe hosted until the year 2006 a series of consultation meetings on the implications of the ratification of the Rome Statute for the domestic legal systems of Council of Europe member states. These meetings were designed to foster exchanges of views on the legal problems encountered in the implementation process and on models developed in certain countries to overcome these problems.

In parallel with these consultations, the Venice Commission, which is the Council of Europe body focusing on constitutional reform issues, adopted a Report on constitutional issues raised by the ratification of the Rome Statute.

More recently, in March of this year, a side-event was organised at the initiative of the Principality of Liechtenstein, at the margins of the 45th meeting of the Council of Europe Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI) on the topic of the "Ratification and Implementation of the Kampala Amendments on the Crime of Aggression in the European Context".

The Council of Europe takes pride in these accomplishments. It trusts that if today 41 of the 47 member States of the Council of Europe are Parties to the Rome Statute, it is also owing to the contribution – however modest - of this Organisation to the development of the Court.

We are aware, however, of the challenges still lying ahead of the Court, as the debates before this Assembly show.

In order to better address these challenges, I should like to appeal to the representatives of Council of Europe member States attending this session to see in this Organisation a wide array of instruments at their disposal to further the objectives of the Court.

Indeed, your authorities might wish to give resonance and political impetus to their ongoing concerns and aspirations through the Committee of Ministers. The parliamentarians of your countries sitting in the Parliamentary Assembly might consider doing likewise. As the democratic conscience of the 47 Council of Europe member States, the Parliamentary Assembly is well placed to air the unique perspective of European States, tied by a common history and a set of shared values and principles.

Your authorities might also consider benefiting from the re-known expertise of several intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe, which offer a unique forum to deal with complex technical issues. In this regard, I would like to mention here the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) and the Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI). Acting as the Secretary to the CAHDI, I can attest to the genuine interest of the legal advisers reunited in this committee for all issues related to the Court.

Madam President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude: Because it can draw from its past achievements and because it remains the benchmark in Europe for human rights, the rule of law and democracy, the Council of Europe has the means and the legitimacy to continue playing an active role as a supporter to the Court.

As declared by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, earlier this year, rest assured that the Council of Europe stands ready to assist its member states in this process, by mobilizing its key assets: competence, commitment and consistency with the cores values for which it stands.

I thank you for your attention.