



Reference: ASP/2013/027

Secretariat – Secrétariat

New York, 8 October 2013

Excellency,

I am writing to you with regard to the twelfth session of the Assembly of States Parties, which will meet from 20 to 28 November 2013 in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The agenda for the twelfth session includes an agenda item titled “General debate”. The sessions of the Assembly, and particularly the general debate, provide a forum where States Parties can engage in a dialogue over a vast range of issues concerning the Rome Statute system. At the eleventh session, the general debate focused on the theme “Tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute: the challenges ahead”.

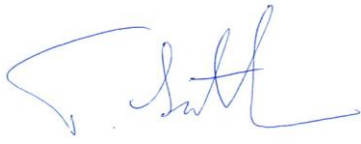
This year, the general debate, which will be held on 21 November 2013, provides another forum for addressing new and persistent challenges facing the Rome Statute system, especially as the work of the Court and the functioning of the whole system have also received attention in other fora over the past year. It is now timelier than ever to address these issues among States Parties. The Assembly, where all 122 States Parties are equally represented, carries out functions for the overall system which include, inter alia, providing a forum for an exchange of views on issues of concern to States. I encourage States Parties to use the general debate and the discussion of two separate substantive issues in plenary session, i.e. the impact of the Rome Statute system on victims and affected communities and cooperation, to bring forward ideas and concrete proposals for enhancing the Rome Statute system. I hope that any meetings of States Parties prior to the Assembly meeting in November will focus on consolidating suggestions to be presented at the twelfth session.

In the general debate this year, States may also wish to take the opportunity to discuss an issue related to one of the foundational principles of the Rome Statute system – the principle of complementarity. It is a bedrock principle of this system, with the International Criminal Court being a court of last resort. It is imperative that States develop their domestic capacity to hold accountable those responsible for the most serious international crimes and to prevent impunity gaps. I invite States Parties to inform the Assembly during the general debate about the measures they have taken and intend to take to build such capacity, as well as about any assistance in the area of capacity-building which they may be in a position to provide to other States, upon request.

I also wish to refer to the recommendation of the Bureau at its 3 October 2013 meeting, that the Assembly, in accordance with rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure and with previous Assembly decisions, request speakers in the general debate to observe a time limit of five minutes. I would therefore encourage all participants in the general debate to ensure that their interventions respect this time limit.

Furthermore, in accordance with the past practice of the Assembly, I wish to draw to your attention the possibility for States to participate in the general debate by making written submissions, which would be posted on the website of the Assembly. I also wish to invite States in a position to do so to submit written statements only.

As the Assembly of States Parties, we are constantly engaged in discussions on how to gradually improve all parts of the system. I look forward to the active engagement of States Parties at the next session of the Assembly.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tiina Intelmann', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tiina Intelmann
President
Assembly of States Parties