



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

**FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

(The Hague, 18-26 November 2015)

GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT

BY

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The Hague, 18 November 2015

(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity and congratulate you on your first year in office as President of this Assembly. I would like to commend also Judge Fernandez de Gurmendi and Judges Aluoch and Ozaki for their election as President and Vice-Presidents of the Court respectively, and the newly elected judges that were sworn in earlier this year.

I would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for victims and the Advisory Committee on nominations of judges.

Bulgaria fully associates itself with the statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States made by H.E.

In addition, I would like to make the following observations.

Mr. President,

The Report on the activities and the programme performance of the ICC shows the progress made in the work of the Court over the past year. It illustrates that the ICC is a dynamic and a solid institution. At the same time the growing number of cases before the ICC is an indicator of the paramount importance of the Court in the fight against impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. The ICC does not replace national criminal jurisdictions but rather it complements them and in accordance with the Rome Statute States Parties have primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting these crimes. In this context, we very much appreciate the Report of the Court on complementarity and its particular focus on the challenges posed by conflict-related Sexual and Gender-Based violence and we look forward to the discussions which will be held tomorrow (Thursday, 19 November 2015).

Mr. President,

There are a number of important reform initiatives under way, including review by the Court's judges through the Working Group on Lessons Learnt and the Registrar's ReVision project. In this regard, we welcome the detailed Report of the WG on Lessons Learned and commend the judges for their efforts to enhance the Court's efficiency and effectiveness through harmonizing the Courts' practices and improving its working methods. We welcome the progress on Clusters A, B, C and E and especially the preparation of the Pre-Trial Manual.

We also note the Report on the Review of the organizational structure of the Registry and we support decisions on reorganization and streamline of the Registry aiming to achieve, in particular, the following goals: 1/merger of existing units within the structure of the Registry with similar and overlapping functions related to the same or similar subject be it victims or defence issues; 2/ prevention of repetitive and contradicting practices and 3/ insurance of budgetary savings.

Full cooperation with the Court by all states and other international actors, such as the UN Security Council, is essential for the work and the success of the ICC, in particular when the Security Council has made a referral to the Court. Improved cooperation is needed in all areas – from investigation to arrests, from witness protection to the enforcement of sentences. At the same time, cooperation in the field of identification, freezing and seizing the assets of the suspects/respectively of the accused persons is vital for the achievement of 2 main goals: 1/ to prevent that these persons resort to the legal aid of the ICC which is a financial burden for the budget of the Court and 2/ in case of conviction, the property and means of the sentenced persons are used for reparation of victims.

Mr. President,

The ICC is accountable to the Assembly of States Parties and the international community at large but when it comes to the Court's judicial and prosecutorial functions, its independence must be preserved and its authority upheld.

We fully support the independence of the ICC and we strongly believe that the judicial independence and the integrity of the judicial proceedings are vital for the achievement of the Court's goals.

Mr. President,

There can't be lasting peace without ensuring justice and this goal can't be achieved without universality of the Rome Statute. We join the call to all States that are not yet Parties to the Rome Statute to ratify or to accede to it.