



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

XV session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute
of the International Criminal Court

General debate

The Hague, 16 November 2016

Mister President of the Assembly,
Ladies and Gentlemen Representatives of the Court,
Ladies and Gentlemen distinguished Delegates,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic on behalf of the European Union and its Member States on the occasion of the general debate of the 15th session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Belgium arrives at this 15th ordinary session of the Assembly of States Parties in a spirit of openness to dialogue and search for consensus, with strict respect for the fundamental principles and the integrity of the Rome Statute.

While respecting the decisions to withdraw from the Rome Statute which have recently been taken, in full sovereignty, by certain States, Belgium strongly regrets these withdrawals, which run contrary to the objective of universality of the Court, and is hoping to be able to pursue a loyal and constructive dialogue with these States and with all States who will express a desire for this on the strengthening of the system for the fight against impunity that has been put in place by the Statute. This system for the fight against impunity, which above all aims to render justice to the victims of the most atrocious crimes that shock the international community, places States at its center by entrusting them with the primary responsibility for prosecuting the authors of these crimes.

In this regard, Belgium would like to recall the initiative which it is supporting together with Argentina, The Netherlands and Slovenia in the field of mutual legal assistance and extradition in the framework of the prosecution of these crimes at the national level. This initiative is evidently in keeping with the application of the principle of complementarity, since it puts forward a framework for bilateral cooperation. This initiative is currently supported by 52 States from all regions of the world and a side event is dedicated to it on the first day of the session of the Assembly.

Concerning the items on the agenda of this session, Belgium shall participate actively in particular to the different debates on cooperation, on the proposals for amendments to the instruments of the Court as well as on the budget to be allocated to the Court for 2017. The Court will be able to count on Belgium's support for obtaining the means which are necessary for properly carrying out its judicial activities, all while taking into account the constraints with which a large numbers of States, including Belgium, are confronted.

During this session, Belgium will also co-organize a pledging ceremony for the ratification of the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court. On this occasion, it will be proposed to States Parties to officially pledge to ratify this Agreement before 1 July 2018, the date of the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute. The Court has a real need to see a significant increase in the number of States Parties to this agreement, which will allow it to improve the efficiency of its work in numerous situations.

Finally, Belgium would like to seize the opportunity presented by this intervention to announce its intention to make a new contribution to the Trust Fund for Victims of the International Criminal Court in 2017. The remarkable work of this Fund deserves to be underlined and Belgium has been supporting it financially since its creation.