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Statement of Mr. Alan Kessel,
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Canada

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Canada

Mr President,

In gatherings such as this one today, far away from the armed conflicts of the world, we must remember the thousands of children, women and men who have been victims of unimaginable atrocities: mass killings, genocide, enslavement, sexual violence, to name only a few. As members of the international community, we have a collective responsibility to these victims to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are held to account, and that others are deterred from inflicting similar harm. It is our duty to ourselves, to our children and to humanity.

We will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute next year and we should be proud of what has been accomplished. With the support of States Parties, the ICC has made landmark judgments condemning the most serious international criminal acts, including recruitment of child soldiers, and sexual and gender-based crimes.

In 1998, States came together with a vision: to build an international court capable of prosecuting those responsible for the most serious and heinous international crimes. Twenty years later, many UN members have ratified the Rome Statute and abide by its principles and values. Decades of legacy from

Nuremberg and Tokyo, through Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia helped pave the way to build the ICC. Twenty years later, we can declare that the ICC has grown out of infancy to become a mature and well balanced institution. For the Court to carry out its duties, it must be able to rely on a strong and efficient Secretariat. We are grateful that we have such an organisation and I want to take this moment to express Canada's appreciation for the quality of the work and the dedication of the staff of the Secretariat.

Mr. President,

We remain some distance from achieving full universalization of the Rome Statute. Canada calls upon those states which have not yet done so to consider acceding to the Rome Statute. Canada will continue, at every opportunity, to encourage states which have not already done so to join the Rome Statute system as an expression of their commitment to international criminal justice.

But we are going through difficult times and strong international institutions are needed to address the political impasses, the conflicts and the violence. We recognize that

credible international institutions are essential to finding peaceful solutions to some of the world's most intractable problems and conflicts.

Canada actively supported the development of the Rome Statute in 1998. We were active in the negotiations leading to the understanding in Kampala in 2010. Canada will continue to work tirelessly to reach an agreement on this important element and move forward.

Mr President,

Canada is disappointed with Burundi's withdrawal from the Court. At this time in history, we want to reiterate that all victims have a right to justice. The steadfast support of the Court by States Parties is more important than ever in the fight against impunity. Cooperation is vital for work of the Court. Canada remains preoccupied with the fact that arrest warrants remain unexecuted. Cooperation is key to advancing the path of justice.

It is the duty of every State to prosecute within its jurisdiction those responsible for serious international crimes. As a court of last resort, the International Criminal Court seeks to complement

– not replace –national courts. But it does, in turn, challenge states to engage in investigations and prosecutions that are effective and meaningful in providing justice for victims.

Looking forward, Canada will continue to work constructively with other States to achieve our common goals of maintaining and strengthening the structure of a permanent, independent judicial institution that has the respect and confidence of the international community. This cannot happen in absence of cooperation with the Court and with other States Parties.

I thank you Mr President