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STATEMENT

BY

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ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

AT THE

16TH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES
TO THE ROME STATUTE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

NEW YORK
6TH DECEMBER 2017

Thank you Mr. President.

**Mr. President,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am indeed honoured to address the 16th Session of the Assembly of States Parties on behalf of the Republic of The Gambia. Please allow me to congratulate the newly elected President of the Assembly Judge O-Gon Kwon. Allow me to also thank the outgoing President, my brother and friend His Excellency Mr. Sidiki Kaba, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Sister Republic of Senegal for his stewardship of the Assembly over the last three years.

Mr. President,

The Gambia wishes to reiterate its full support to the International Criminal Court. In fact, one of the first international acts of the new Government of The Gambia only two months after being installed, was to reverse the unfortunate decision of the previous Government to withdraw from the Court. This single act alone at a time when we in The Gambia are faced with so many challenges and competing priorities after 22 years of dictatorship, demonstrated our total commitment to the Court and the shared values that it represents.

Mr. President,

We wish to recognise the steady progress and significant milestones that the court continues to make in the execution of its mandate. There is greater awareness today about international criminal justice than at any point in history and the Court has contributed substantially to this public knowledge. However, despite all the achievements, it is undeniable that the Court is still in its infancy and that it is still evolving. The Court can still achieve greater impact if it reduces its message to the barest minimum i.e. that it is a forum for justice for all victims of atrocity crimes. In the final analysis, this is what the ICC is about and that simple message must not be lost on anyone.

Mr. President,

The Court is also not without challenges. Like all huge international organisations, the Court continues to encounter challenges in funding, capacity, diplomacy, political will etc. These challenges are however not insurmountable. They require a combination of measures to overcome them. These include state cooperation with the Court in the arrest and surrender of suspects. States must comply with requests for arrest and surrender of suspects to the Court. Failure to do so will undermine the credibility of the Court and render it ineffective in the face of calls for justice by victims of mass atrocity crimes.

also complement existing national efforts at promoting and protecting the rights of all especially women and children.

Mr. President,

Finally, in seeking to attain the universal application of the Rome Statute, it is understandable that States have expressed some concerns. However these concerns should be seen as providing an opportunity for constructive engagement but with the understanding that the integrity of the Rome Statute and the need to safeguard its key objectives are preserved. In this regard, The Gambia supports the activation of the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression and calls on all Member States of the Rome Statute to do so by consensus. **I thank you all for your kind attention.**