

*Please check against delivery*

**Statement by**  
**Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia**  
**to the United Nations, Ms. Agnese Vilde**  
**at the**  
**General debate of the**  
**Sixteenth Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute**  
**of the International Criminal Court**  
**United Nations, New York, December 7, 2017**

**Mr President,**

**Distinguished delegates,**

At the outset, let me state that Latvia fully aligns with the statement delivered [yesterday] on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Kaba for his work and efforts as the President of this Assembly.

We congratulate the newly elected President of the Assembly Mr. O- Gon – Kwon, the Vice-Presidents and members of the Bureau for the upcoming Assembly sessions. Latvia is determined to cooperate closely with the incoming President and the Bureau, and the international community with a view to strengthen the architecture of the international legal order where the International Criminal Court plays an important role.

Latvia also would like to thank the outgoing judges for their outstanding work and congratulate the newly elected six judges.

**Mr President,**

The International Criminal Court is the last resort for criminal justice, and it stands guard for the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These principles are of fundamental importance to achieve peace, justice and sustainable development. Latvia is fully committed to do its part.

There are many places in the world where egregious violations of international law are pervasive. There are actors whose assertive actions, often hidden behind false allegations, misinformation campaigns and abuse of international law, contribute to these atrocious crimes. But let me be clear in this regard - no one can stay out of the reach of justice forever.

As we know, the work of the Court is complementary to the national justice systems. It does not replace them. There should be no fear that a state might lose its sovereignty when joining the Rome Statute. Moreover, there is no place for shifting the failures of internal politics on the shoulders of international institutions when the primary responsibility lies with the state itself. However, the work of the Court should be praised, as often it is the only genuine instance for those who suffer the consequences of armed conflicts and are victims of grave violations of the humanitarian law and human rights.

Furthermore, for the work of the Court to be efficient and effective, there must be genuine cooperation with it. In this regard, we welcome the Court's efforts and Georgia's commitment in stepping up their cooperation to facilitate the investigation in and around South Ossetia. We also are hopeful that the ongoing preliminary examination activities, amongst others in Ukraine, will provide clarity in the situations under scrutiny.

Latvia reiterates the call to the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC.

The universality of the Rome Statute and the global reach of the Court would greatly contribute to preventing that the perpetrators escape from criminal responsibility and their atrocious crimes remain unpunished. Therefore Latvia encourages all the member states to strengthen the Rome Statute system and non-member states to ratify the Rome Statute and its Kampala Amendments on the crime of aggression.

Seven years ago, the member states unanimously adopted the Kampala Amendments. Now all the necessary conditions are met to activate the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. This Assembly must take a very important and necessary decision.

The crime of aggression must be properly addressed, and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter upheld. Perpetrators of the most serious crimes of international concern cannot go unpunished. Therefore Latvia encourages all member states to support the activation of the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. We sincerely hope this important decision will be adopted by consensus during this session.

**Mr President,**

Next year will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the adoption of the Rome Statute and it will coincide with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Latvia. In 2018, there will be a good reason to reflect on the challenges we have faced, celebrate our achievements and consider the future endeavours. Aspirations for democratic values and justice have been the guiding light for the Latvian people in the times of hardship. We know much too well that peace and justice must be cherished, and the International Criminal Court is one of the instances that help preserve these values.

Latvia is committed to further strengthen and support the important work of the Court.

I thank you.