



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

Check against delivery

S T A T E M E N T

BY

H.E. MR. JACEK CZAPUTOWICZ

***UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND***

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 6TH, 2017

Mr. President,

Madam President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Poland aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its Member States. We would also like to make a few remarks in our national capacity.

Let me begin by expressing my acknowledgement and gratitude to Minister Sidiki Kaba for his tireless work as President of the Assembly of States Parties. At the same time I welcome the appointment of Judge O-Gon Kwon as his successor. The new Assembly President may count on Poland's continued support. Allow me also to congratulate the newly elected judges of the International Criminal Court. I am certain that they will make a significant contribution to the realization of the lofty mission of the Court for years to come.

Mr. President,

July 17, 2018, will mark the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court. The idea was revolutionary: to create the first permanent international court for prosecuting the most serious crimes of international law. Today, the ICC proudly continues the tradition of ad hoc criminal tribunals, most notably the Nuremberg Tribunal, by fighting the impunity of perpetrators and contributing to the prevention of the most serious crimes.

This year, the Republic Poland had an honor to host the distinguished judges of the Court during a judicial retreat in Kraków. The judges visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, a Concentration and Extermination Camp built by German Nazi authorities on German territory annexed from Poland during WWII. In her entry in the Guest Book of the Auschwitz Memorial, the President of the ICC Silvia Fernandez de Gurmendi wrote: "The atrocities committed here still resonate today. Justice for such crimes must remain humanity's common goal and endeavor. The judges of the International Criminal Court are committed to this end". Indeed, it is our dream that nations of the world learn from history and that such atrocities never occur again.

Because of its history, Poland has always valued and supported the development of international criminal justice as a means of preventing further crimes. It was Raphael Lemkin, a scholar of Polish-Jewish origin, who coined the term "genocide", which was employed in Nuremberg trials. Poland believes that the ICC is a worthy successor to the Nuremberg tribunal and that it has become an important element of the international order based on law. In our view, not only does the ICC contribute to the fight against impunity and prevention of the most serious crimes, but it also serves the general role of upholding international law in challenging times.

Distinguished Delegates,

Today we stand before the historical opportunity of accepting the jurisdiction of ICC over the crime of aggression, as envisioned by the Rome Statute Review Conference which took place in Kampala 7 years ago. Since then, this amendment has been ratified by 34 State Parties, including Poland. There is only one final condition we need to meet in order to accomplish the activation and Poland calls on the Assembly of States Parties to approve the activation of the Court's jurisdiction.

Mr. President,

In 2018 Poland will become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. We are confident that effective cooperation between the Security Council and the ICC should contribute to strengthening global peace and security. We will do our best to advance this process during our term on the Council.

The proper functioning of the International Criminal Court is more than ever dependent on the political will of the international community. In this context, the Republic of Poland supports the efforts to universalize the Rome Statute. 123 accessions and ratifications represent a significant number but we believe that the Rome System can expand further to ensure even more extensive delivery of international criminal justice. We welcomed the news about the Republic of South Africa and The Gambia revoking their decision to withdraw from the Rome Statute.

Mr. President,

Throughout its history, Poland has fallen victim to atrocious crimes of international law. The 20th anniversary of establishment of the International Criminal Court is of special importance to us. The Polish people know that justice constitutes the foundation of freedom. For this reason, we remain staunch supporters of the development of international criminal justice. It is only by working together, with an active role of the ICC, that we can fight impunity, prevent crimes, and save other peoples from being victims of atrocities.

Thank you.