

**SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES
PARTIES TO THE**

**ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL
COURT**

GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT

BY

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HEAD OF THE BULGARIAN DELEGATION

Mr President,

Distinguished members of the Court,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome this opportunity to address the Assembly of States Parties on behalf of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Let me begin by congratulating Mr O-Gon Kwon on his first year as President of this Assembly. I also warmly congratulate Vice-President Ambassador Horslund and the newly-elected members of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims and the Advisory Committee on Nominations of Judges.

Bulgaria fully aligns with the statement made earlier by Austria on behalf of the EU and its Member States. I would now like to make some observations in my national capacity.

As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute this year, it is more relevant than ever to express our unwavering support for the International Criminal Court and its indispensable work.

The Rome Statute lies at the very foundation of the global efforts to achieve a rules-based international order. We can only achieve this together, advocating for compliance with obligations and calling for universality.

The ICC is accountable to the Assembly of States Parties and the international community, but when it comes to the Court's judicial and prosecutorial functions, its independence must be preserved and its authority upheld. We fully support the independence of the ICC and we strongly believe that judicial independence and integrity of the judicial proceedings are vital for attainment of the Court's objectives.

In this context we would like to thank Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda for her efforts and express our support for her work.

Furthermore, I would like to point out that my delegation attaches great importance to the responsibility of the Assembly to elect the next

Prosecutor in 2020 through a transparent and inclusive merit-based process.

While my delegation recognizes that the important tasks of the Court and its increasing workload require sufficient funding, we also welcome the Court's efforts to identify savings in the budget proposal for next year. We would like to seize this opportunity to call upon states in arrears to settle their outstanding contributions.

I would like to point out that Bulgaria attaches great importance to international cooperation in dealing with impunity. As part of our efforts to further deepen international cooperation and to provide an opportunity to discuss the relevant issues jointly, and as contribution to the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute, earlier this year, the then Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union organized on the 23rd May in The Hague for a third time the EU Day against Impunity - together with the European Commission, Eurojust, the International Criminal Court, The European Genocide Network as well as other relevant stakeholders. This was an opportunity to promote national investigations and prosecutions, and to appropriately recognise the common efforts of the EU and its Member states in enforcing international criminal law. The EU Day against Impunity provided an occasion to address the position and participation of victims in criminal proceedings for crimes under the Rome Statute and to reinvigorate our commitment to continue fighting against impunity. In light of the 20th Anniversary of the Rome Statute, the discussion focused on the shared responsibility of national jurisdictions and the ICC to investigate and prosecute core international crimes. Considering the lack of jurisdiction of the ICC in certain areas in the world affected by armed conflicts, the responsibility of EU Member States to domestically investigate and prosecute crimes committed in the context of those conflicts, to bring perpetrators to justice and pay respects to victims of atrocities was highlighted. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the Court's officials, especially the Presidency, Prosecutor Bensouda and their staff for their cooperation and support.

Furthermore, in the framework of the events marking the 20th Anniversary of the Rome Statute and raising awareness of its principles, my government

was happy to take part, together with a number of other countries from Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the High-Level Regional Cooperation Seminar organised in Georgia by the ICC with the support of the Government of Georgia and with the financial support of the European Commission. We see value in such events and encourage more of their kind.

Mr President,

Distinguished colleagues,

The Republic of Bulgaria believes that all State parties should adhere to the principles of unity, cooperation, coordination and complementarity in light of the common goals of securing long-term gains for international justice and achieving further effectiveness and efficiency in the activities of the ICC.

The Bulgarian delegation looks forward to engaging with all of you in the busy days ahead of us.

I thank you for your attention!