

**Statement of H.E. Ambassador Elpidoforos A. Economou of the Republic of
Cyprus to the 17th Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the
International Criminal Court (ICC)**

The Hague, 6 December 2018

Mr. President of the Assembly of States Parties,

Mr. President of the International Criminal Court,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address this Session of the Assembly of the States Parties to the Rome Statute. The Republic of Cyprus fully aligns with the statement delivered by Austria on behalf of the European Union and its member states.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, President Kwon, for your able leadership during your first year at the helm of our Assembly.

Mr. President,

2018 marks the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute. Twenty years since the international community collectively declared the end of impunity for perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. The adoption of the Rome Statute is a milestone achievement in the history of international criminal justice and one that was widely welcomed in countries like the Republic of Cyprus which still has open wounds due to the violation of fundamental provisions of the Rome Statute in its territory by a third state. These painful national experiences have made Cyprus a staunch supporter of the Rome Statute system from the very outset.

Cyprus actively participated in the celebrations that were held to commemorate this anniversary. On July 5, 2018, we hosted a successful national event to commemorate the 20 years of the Rome Statute at the Supreme Court of Cyprus. The main speaker was Justice Georghios Pikis, former Judge of the ICC. Moreover, Cyprus co-sponsored the events that were held in the Hague and New York on July 17, 2018.

July 17, 2018 also marked the long-awaited activation of the Court's jurisdiction on the crime of aggression, thus completing the Rome Statute system as it was originally envisioned in line with the legacy of the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals after World War II. The fact that despite our divergences we managed to reach a consensus during

the last ASP, is a testament to the resilience of this Assembly. Cyprus calls upon all States that have not done so, to ratify the Kampala Amendments in order to ensure that there will be no impunity for the crime of aggression, which constitutes the worst form of the illegal use of force.

Mr. President,

The adoption of the Rome Statute has also demonstrated our respect to the memory of the millions of victims of heinous atrocities of the past centuries. The Rome Statute provides that the victims can participate in the Court's proceedings and they can receive assistance and reparations. The Trust Fund for the Victims does a remarkable work in favor of the victims, in accordance with its assistance mandate and its responsibility for the implementation of the Court's reparation orders. It is clear that the Trust Fund's financial needs are widening. I am therefore very pleased to announce that in the coming days Cyprus will make its second symbolic voluntary contribution to the Trust Fund.

A fundamental pillar of the Rome Statute is the independence and impartiality of the Court, its' Judges and Prosecutor. The Court and its officials should be allowed to perform their functions in accordance with the Court's jurisdiction, without outside interference. On our side, as States Parties we should always be open for constructive dialogue amongst States Parties and also with states not yet parties, since our vision is that one day this Court will become universal. But this dialogue should not put into question the core principles or the integrity of the Rome Statute. The lively debate about the Court in the international community in fact reveals that this is an institution that matters.

There are a lot of lessons to be drawn from the first twenty years of the Rome Statute and certainly there is room for strengthening the Court and its efficiency. However, the Court has proven that it can accomplish its mandate, while respecting both the rights of the victims and the rights of the accused. One such example is the landmark verdict of the Court in the Al-Mahdi case in relation to the destruction of World Heritage historic and religious monuments in Timbuktu, Mali. This was the first verdict of the Court on the war crime of destruction of cultural heritage. Cyprus attaches particular importance to the prevention of the destruction of cultural heritage, and has taken an active role on the issue both in multilateral fora and bilaterally. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the activities of the Chief Prosecutor Mrs. Bensouda on this area and to welcome the cooperation of her Office with UNESCO in line with their respective mandates.

Mr. President,

Our collective effort and responsibility to achieve universality is confronted with challenges. More than one third of UN Member States representing the majority of the global population remain outside the Rome Statute. Universality is key for the application of the principle of equality before the law and also to address the frustrations of the international community for its inability to ensure accountability when atrocities occur in States not parties. We should persevere in our collective efforts to dispel the misconceptions about the Court, explain that it is a Court of last resort only, complementary to national jurisdictions, and encourage more States to take the sovereign decision to join us.

Mr. President,

In closing, I would like to underline that Cyprus will continue its unwavering support for the Court since we are confident that a rules-based international order is essential for a more just, and therefore a better world for the present and future generations.

Thank you for your attention and I wish to all delegations a productive 17th Session of the Assembly.

