

**STATEMENT BY MISS GLORIA AFUA AKUFFO, THE HONOURABLE
ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF GHANA AND LEADER OF GHANA'S DELEGATION TO
THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES
PARTIES TO THE ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CRIMINAL COURT, THE HAGUE, 5TH TO 12TH DECEMBER, 2018**

Mr. President,

My delegation conveys Ghana's warm compliments, to you in particular and to the Assembly in General. Our appreciation goes to the Bureau for its dedication and hard work towards a successful Seventeenth Session. Please be assured, Mr. President, of the full cooperation of my delegation for this meeting. We commend Judge Chile Eboe-Osuji, President of the ICC and the Secretariat for ably steering the affairs of the Court this far. We congratulate Mr. Peter Lewis on his appointment as the Registrar of the Court and wish him success. Similarly, we congratulate the States Parties on the Twentieth Anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute.

Mr. President,

We wish to take this opportunity to reiterate Ghana's continued commitment and support for the ICC as a mechanism for punishing crimes of impunity and a deterrent for potential perpetrators of such crimes. Our conviction remains strong in the fundamental values of the Statute and we

recognise those values as essential for the administration of an international criminal justice system. We acknowledge the need to preserve the independence of the Court and to ensure that its decisions, whether administrative or judicial, are just, impartial and fair to States Parties, victims and accused persons alike.

Mr. President,

Continued dialogue and engagement constitute essential components for addressing challenges faced by the Court, in particular, matters concerning the Court's relationship with African countries. Significantly, ensuring parity in the recruitment of staff of the Court will promote fair and equitable representation of the various regional groupings as well as gender balance to promote equal opportunity for States Parties to assist the Court in its work.

Mr. President

The key pillars and principles underpinning the Statute are complementarity, cooperation, independence and impartiality of the Court. Complementarity is a necessary tool for the full realization of the objectives

of the Statute. The need for building the domestic capacity of Judges, prosecutors and other key officials in the domestic judicial systems of States Parties becomes imperative if they are to effectively punish crimes of impunity. Ghana calls on States Parties with the required capacity to provide technical assistance to less endowed countries to enable them deal with these crimes in accordance with the tenets of the Statute. The improvement of the capacity of the domestic justice delivery systems of States Parties will in turn provide ownership of trials to those countries while the independence of their national courts remain paramount and at the same time ensuring the sovereignty of States Parties.

In this regard, the numerous capacity building programmes advertised on the official website of the Court is heart-warming and welcomed. Ghana commends the Court for its efforts in realizing this objective.

Mr. President,

Permit me to recall my statement at the Sixteenth Assembly of States Parties, in which I raised the need for witness protection, before, during and after the trial process. We wish to re-emphasise that position since the ability of the Court to give fair and impartial judgements rests on evidence

of probative value. This brings into sharp focus the critical role played by witnesses in the adjudication process of the Court. The conviction of Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba for witness tampering by the Court is note-worthy. We salute the court for that landmark decision.

Unfortunately, there are instances where witnesses are recanting, resulting in the collapse of cases of the prosecution and casting avoidable slur on the Court. We therefore call for greater involvement of victims in the entire adjudication process, with the necessary protection to encourage them to come forward to testify during trials.

Mr. President,

In appreciation of the activation of the jurisdiction of the Court over the Crime of Aggression, Ghana has commenced the process for the ratification of the Kampala Amendments which is expected to be completed in the not too distant future.

Mr. President

Without doubt sustaining the momentum of promoting the universality of the Rome statute is essential for attaining the aims and objectives of the

statute. Ghana is concerned that some states are questioning the legitimacy of the Court. Ghana wishes to encourage all States Parties to come forward with frank, objective and constructive proposals for dealing with their concerns which can and must be dealt with within the Assembly.

Mr. President

There can be no alternative to resolving resentful serious human rights violations and injustices. There are no options to a concerted global action against impunity except by recourse to the Rome Statute. In this regard, Ghana reiterates its call to States Parties and the international community to continue to support to the ICC.

Ghana wishes to encourage Mr. President, to continue to dialogue with the affected States Parties for the rescission of their withdrawal from the Assembly. It is our common humanity which is at stake. The Assembly must grow if we are to succeed in our resolve to effectively deal with impunity.

We are confident that with your sterling leadership the Assembly is assured of a successful Seventeenth session.

I thank you all for your kind indulgence.