



**International Criminal Court  
Eighteenth Session of the Assembly of States Parties  
(The Hague, 2 to 7 December 2019)**

**Statement in the General Debate  
on behalf of  
Austria**

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to commend all Court and ASP officials for their continued dedicated work in the pursuit of accountability for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole. I also congratulate all newly elected members of the Committee on Budget and Finance and of the Advisory Committee on Nominations.

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement made by Finland on behalf of the European Union and would like to offer the following additional remarks:

Mr. President,

Austria remains a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court. It has been a long-standing Austrian priority to promote effective multilateralism and a global order based on the rule of law. We are fully dedicated to further strengthening the system of international criminal justice as a crucial element of such an order.

We respect the work of the ICC as an independent and impartial judicial institution. We are committed to uphold and defend the principles and values enshrined in the Rome Statute and to preserve its integrity. We strongly oppose any measures that attempt to influence independent court proceedings through political pressure. Such attempts constitute a clear violation of the international rule of law.

Mr. President,

It has been another eventful year for the Court. We would like to highlight the importance of the Court's judgment of 8 July in the Ntaganda case. It constitutes a milestone in the prosecution of sexual violence and confirms that perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence are held accountable. In this context, we also welcome the efforts of civil society that led to the elaboration of "The Hague Principles on Sexual Violence".

Furthermore, we are particularly satisfied with the swift advancement of the proceedings concerning the situation in Bangladesh and Myanmar regarding crimes committed against the Rohingya people. Timely judicial proceedings are essential for the Court's credibility from a victim's perspective.

We are very pleased that Kiribati recently ratified the Rome Statute to become its 123<sup>rd</sup> State Party. However, we regret the withdrawal of the Philippines from the Rome Statute as of last March. States Parties and the ICC need to reinforce their efforts to counter misinformation and false perceptions about the Court's work and relaunch a positive public debate in support of the Rome Statute system, its functioning and its role for victims of atrocity crimes. Austria commends civil society organisations for their tireless efforts in giving victims a voice, as well as the Trust Fund for Victims whose work we have proudly supported with another voluntary contribution this year.

Mr. President,

After more than 15 years in action, the ICC has become the core institution in the fight against impunity, not only through its own prosecutorial and judicial activity, but also in its complementary role of ensuring genuine criminal proceedings at the national level. Additionally, its mere existence has a vital preventive effect.

However, the ICC as a relatively young international organisation still needs fine-tuning in its processes and operations. We therefore welcome the past year's common efforts of States Parties and the Court, in close cooperation with civil society, to prepare an Independent Expert Review with the aim of strengthening the ICC and the Rome Statute system.

Another essential task for the upcoming year will be the election of the next ICC Prosecutor. It is paramount that candidates have experience in the prosecution of complex criminal law cases as well as in-depth knowledge of international criminal law and public international law. At next year's ASP, we will also elect new judges and would like to highlight that it is the responsibility of States Parties to nominate and elect the most suitable and qualified candidates for this position.

We applaud the President, Prosecutor and Registrar of the Court for joining the International Gender Champions Network and welcome the ongoing effort to establish a Gender Focal Point at the ICC.

Finally, when reflecting on the Court's functioning, we must ensure that the Rome Statute remains a modern instrument, which can adequately respond to changing methods of modern warfare. Austria therefore supports the adoption of the proposed amendment to Article 8 concerning the crime of starvation of civilians in non-international armed conflict presented by Switzerland and calls on all States Parties to consider ratifying all previous amendments to the Statute, including on the crime of aggression.

Austria remains committed to making the Court even stronger, more efficient and a solid guarantor of justice for victims.

Thank you Mr. President.