



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

**EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

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STATEMENT

BY

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PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA TO THE KINGDOM
OF THE NETHERLANDS**

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating the newly elected members of the Committee of Budget and Finance, and the member of the Advisory Committee on the nomination of judges.

At the outset, I would like to align myself with the statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Bulgaria re-affirms its commitment to the mission and mandate of the ICC to end impunity for the most serious crimes. In our view, the ICC is an indispensable building block in a global rules-based architecture, an essential element of the world we would like to shape for the future generations. In this context, Bulgaria calls for universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute and in that respect we welcome Kiribati's decision to accede to the Statute.

The ICC contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 16, by promoting the rule of law, aiming to reduce violence and ensuring accountability for the gravest crimes. We would therefore wish to voice our strong support for the independence and integrity of the court, which is essential for its proper functioning and the enforcement of international justice.

Bulgaria welcomes the systematic approach of the Office of the Prosecutor and supports the special focus on sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war. Furthermore, I would like to point out that my delegation attaches great importance to the responsibility of the Assembly to elect the next Prosecutor through a transparent and inclusive merit-based process.

Bulgaria stresses the importance of continuing the efforts by the Court to improve equitable geographical representation and gender balance in professional posts.

Mr. President,

Distinguished colleagues,

Last year's anniversary marked a significant milestone that offered us an opportunity to reflect upon the lessons learnt and to consider how we can further strengthen the Court.

In this context, Bulgaria welcomes the expert review as a positive endeavour, encompassing a process of stocktaking and analysis, aimed at identifying challenges and finding the best possible ways to overcome them, within the framework of the Rome consensus and the main principles it embodies.

Therefore, Bulgaria would propose that the review also covers the selection of judges and the legal aid system of the Court in view of the principle of expeditiousness of proceedings and budgetary implications.

These two important aspects immensely depend on the high caliber of ICC judges, in particular their expertise and commitment to the mandate of the Court. Therefore, we would encourage States Parties to put forward more than one nominee in order to provide broader opportunities for election of the best candidates. Next, we would welcome a more intensive assessment of the knowledge, experience and expertise of the nominees by the Advisory Committee on the nomination of judges, which should be clearly reflected in their recommendations to us.

Without doubt the legal aid system is an important asset for the respect of the rights of those brought to account. However, the system requires a substantial reconsideration taking heed of good examples provided by other similar institutions.

Let me conclude by highlighting the need to strike a balanced and coherent relationship between sound strategic planning and budgetary processes. In this vein, we strongly appreciate the efforts aimed at identifying savings in the proposed budget for 2020.

In the coming days, this Assembly will be discussing important issues and aspects of the work of the Court and consequently, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Bureau and to The Hague and New York Working Groups for their excellent job.

We look forward to engaging actively and constructively in the forthcoming discussions.

I thank you!