



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Eighteenth Session of the Assembly of States Parties

to the Rome Statute

of the International Criminal Court

General Debate

The Hague

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Delivered by H.E. Mr. Pekka Haavisto,

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Finland

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

I am honoured to address the Assembly of States Parties on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Republic of Albania**, Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Serbia*, the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Mr. President,

We should never lose sight of why the ICC was created 21 years ago: to give a voice to the innocent victims of the most serious crimes under international law and to ensure that no shelter is afforded to the perpetrators of such crimes. The memory of past atrocities must remain part of our collective human conscience, and strengthen our determination to end impunity for serious crimes. That is what the ICC was all about and that is why it is still so important today.

The EU and its Member States remain committed to an international rules-based order. The ICC is an integral part of this order, a core element in the fight against impunity and in the pursuit of justice, which are essential components of sustainable peace, security and reconciliation. We must continue to ensure full cooperation with the Court for it to carry out its mandate.

Mr President,

Today, two decades after the creation of the Rome Statute system, we have the opportunity to reflect on the achievements, but also on what we can improve to shape the future of a resilient ICC. We attach great importance to our common efforts aimed at reviewing the functioning of the Court, to make it stronger and more effective. This exercise needs to be inclusive and transparent and be a collective endeavour to which the Court, States Parties and civil society must all contribute.

We insist on the fundamental importance of electing the most highly qualified judges and prosecutor to the Court. A credible and transparent process of nomination and election is crucial to ensure the legitimacy of the Court.

We encourage the Court to look for ways to enhance the efficiency of investigations, prosecutions and judicial proceedings. We welcome the efforts to identify savings and streamline administrative proceedings as outlined in the proposed budget for 2020. We continue to encourage the Court to use its available resources efficiently and to provide transparent and realistic budgetary proposals.

On their part, States Parties must conduct a critical reflection and identify areas where they can help improve the functioning of the Court.

It is of utmost importance that in this process, the integrity of the Rome Statute is preserved and its core principles are not called into question.

In order for the Court to fulfil its important mandate, we call upon all States Parties to continue to provide it with the necessary financial resources and to pay their annual contributions in time.

Mr President,

The ICC is the central pillar of a global system of international justice. It is important that the Court continues to cooperate closely with other international mechanisms established to ascertain facts related to alleged violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law, in view of facilitating the prosecution of these crimes.

We believe that efforts to promote the universality of the Rome Statute contribute to the prevention of mass atrocities. Thus, the European Union will continue to advocate for the universal ratification and implementation of the Rome Statute through the various means at its disposal and will continue to work with the international community in a concerted effort to bring constructive and positive attention to the work of the ICC.

We also highlight that the role of the ICC is to complement, not to replace existing national judicial systems. Therefore, all States Parties need to adopt effective national legislation to implement the Rome Statute and to reinforce their national capacities to address these serious crimes.

Mr President,

The ICC is an independent and impartial judicial institution. Protecting the neutrality and judicial independence of the Court is paramount to its proper functioning. Political considerations are not part of judicial processes. We are concerned about measures taken against Court officials. The EU and its Member States will continue to support fully the independence of the ICC, and will relentlessly protect the Court and its staff against any external pressures or threats.

Today, the victims of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole are being heard. Their aspirations for justice must be realized. The ICC remains a point of reference for them. In this regard, we also highlight the crucial work of the Trust Fund for Victims. Today – as ever – the ICC can count on our unwavering support.

Thank you.

*Republic of Albania, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

** The alignment was added on 19.1.2021 upon request of the Republic of Albania.