



ICELAND
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Statement by
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General Debate

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to the Rome Statute
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Mr. President, your excellencies,

Iceland reiterates its strong and continued support for the ICC. Iceland highly appreciates the Court's contribution towards establishing accountability for the most serious crimes under international law, and providing justice to the victims, while upholding the principle of complementarity.

The work of the ICC promotes respect for fundamental human rights and principles of international humanitarian law. It also importantly contributes to the advancement of post-conflict peace-building and reconciliation, stability and sustainable development.

Today the Court faces a number of challenges which must be addressed by the Assembly of States Parties and the Court. Iceland welcomes the upcoming decision of this Assembly to establish a process for identifying and implementing measures to strengthen the Court and improve its performance.

In our view, such process must be transparent, inclusive and comprehensive and involve all States Parties, the Court itself and other relevant stakeholders.

We also stress the importance of the judicial and prosecutorial independence of the Court enshrined in the Rome Statute.

Mr. President,

While we work to strengthen the Court, encouraging more States Parties to ratify the Rome Statute and join the Court still remains a priority. We therefore congratulate Kiribati on becoming the 123rd State Party to the ICC, and encourage States who have not yet become party to do so. By increasing the number of States Parties, the Court will be better able to address the most serious international crimes with greater consistency and impact.

Iceland thus regrets that the Philippines left the ICC in March this year. We await the outcome of the preliminary examination by the Office of the Prosecutor on the situation in the Philippines regarding possible crimes committed in the context of the “war on drugs” campaign of the Government of the Philippines.

Mr. President,

Our ability to address current challenges through the Rome Statute system is a testament to the relevance and importance of the ICC in our fight against impunity worldwide.

Iceland welcomes the upcoming decision of this Assembly to include starvation of civilians as a war crime in non-international armed conflicts.

We thank Switzerland for shedding light on this important issue.

Mr. President,

Next year we are faced with the important task of choosing a new Prosecutor and six judges of the Court.

The Assembly has set up a good system to identify candidates for the Prosecutor role and we will follow that process closely.

We welcome the work on the review of the procedure for the nomination and election of judges.

As States Parties, we bear the core responsibility when making these choices, so merit must guide both nominations and ballots.

Increased transparency and evaluation of candidates through the Advisory Committee will assist States in this regard.

Mr. President,

Iceland joins the voices of those who call for enhanced cooperation between the Court and the Security Council, and we note with great concern that the situation in Syria has not yet been referred to the ICC by the Council. We also note that the Court has communicated 15 findings of non-cooperation by states to the Council without receiving a substantive response.

It goes without saying that the effectiveness of the ICC vitally depends on the cooperation of its States parties.

Of particular importance is the prompt execution of arrest warrants. We thus strongly urge all States to cooperate fully and effectively with the Court.

Mr. President,

The persecution against the Rohingya people and the reported gross violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that have taken place in Rakhine remain a serious concern.

Iceland therefore welcomes the decision of Pre-Trial Chamber three of the ICC, from 14 November 2019, to authorize the Prosecutor to open an investigation into crimes committed against the Rohingya on or after 1 June 2010.

This decision is an important step towards justice.

Mr. President,

Iceland is a staunch supporter of the work of the Prosecutor in combating sexual and gender-based crime and atrocity crimes against or otherwise affecting children.

We also encourage the Court to continue to develop its institutional capacity to investigate and prosecute these serious crimes.

Justice to the victims of atrocity crimes and full realization of the rights of victims lies at the heart of the promise of the ICC.

In this context, we would like to commend the Trust Fund for Victims for its important work for victims of sexual and gender based violence. Iceland also commends the work of human right defenders and civil society organisations which work for the protection of victims.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Iceland's strong and unwavering support to the ICC.

The Court is our beacon of justice and it is our common responsibility to make it stronger and more effective.

Thank you for your attention.