



Peter Lewis

Registrar of the International Criminal Court

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

*The Hague*

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Your Excellency, President of the Assembly of States Parties,  
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,  
Mr President,  
Madam Prosecutor,  
Mr Deputy Prosecutor,

It is a great honour and privilege to be addressing the eighteenth session of the Assembly of States Parties.

In presenting the budget for the International Criminal Court, I must start by acknowledging that ever since the Court's establishment, the States Parties have invested significant amounts of resources into the ICC and have continued to do so despite financial challenges to their own public spending.

We are very mindful of this fact and extremely appreciative of the strong financial support you have demonstrated over the years.

We are very also much aware and acknowledge that the substantial investment you have made needs to be matched by efficient performance of our duties and that we demonstrate that we are committed to efficiencies and savings.

For the first year, budget process within the Court has been strengthened by a new, improved, strategic planning process. With the addition for the first time of the Registry Strategic Plan, we now have together with the existing strategic plans for the Office of the Prosecutor and the Court's strategic plan, a full set of strategic plans at the Court.

We are very grateful to the States Parties who have responded to our consultations on these plans and provided their input, which has strengthened the process. These strategic plans provide us with a clear roadmap how we can improve the core functions of the Court, administer our key duties more efficiently and with reduced costs, and to enable us to strive to be a fully capable, established institution while also being able to retain flexibility and prioritisation when needed.

Let me turn now to the proposed programme budget for 2020.

As you are aware, the Court proposed a programme budget of €146,94 million. This represented an increase of €2,39 million or 1.7 per cent, over the 2019 approved budget.

It is important to note that this budget, as a result of stringent measures that we have taken within the Court, already represented the lowest percentage increase that the Court has put forward.

Within that budget, we have proposed to absorb two additional, new pressures on the Court. One is the application of the United Nations common system in the amount of €2.4 million, and the other one is, for the first time, the proposal on capital replacements for the maintenance of the Court's premises in the amount of €1.3 million.

To illustrate stringency with which we have approached this budget, in respect of the increase of €2.4 million to the UN common system, we have looked within the Court's budget and found an additional €1.3 million of savings. Therefore, we did not put forward a proposal to you to ask for the full costs to the changes of the UN common system.

With respect to capital replacement, you are seeing this proposal for €1.3 million for the first time. As it has been, I think, acknowledged, there is a need to establish efficient, long-term means of funding capital replacements to the Court's premises. This is the first time we have put forward this proposal and we look forward to continuing our discussions to find sustainable solutions for the future, in line with the recommendations of the CBF.

Following the submission of our initial budget, the Court then submitted an addendum to the budget in the amount of €230.7 thousand, to cover the legal aid for the defence team of Mr. Al Hassan. This is to reflect the fact that we had a confirmation of charges hearing in the Al Hassan case after the submission of the budget.

However, to illustrate the budget stringency we have applied within the Court, although we have put forward this addendum, we have also indicated that we will absorb that pressure within the 2020 budget.

The Committee on Budget and Finance reviewed the Court's proposal, and recommended reductions to the proposed budget of €1.44 million. If the CBF's proposal is adopted by you, this would amount to an increase of 0.7 per cent for the entire Court or approximately €940 thousand compared to the 2019 approved budget.

I would like to thank the Committee on Budget and Finance and its Chair for the important role that they played this year, as every other year, in closely scrutinising the Court's proposal and providing you, States, with their invaluable financial expertise and their concrete recommendations.

I am also grateful to the CBF for their recommendations on the issue of liquidity. This is a matter of continuing concern for the Court, and I hope the States Parties will consider the CBF's recommendations – which were also made by the External Auditor – to help us minimise the risks of liquidity short-fall for the Court.

Since the CBF session, there has been one notable development which has imposed an additional and unforeseen impact on our budget next year.

The International Civil Service Commission has undertaken a survey of living costs in The Hague. The last time they did so was in 2011. The Commission has concluded that the living costs has gone up in the Hague and has therefore increased the post adjustment for all professional staff subject the UN common system in The Hague, and that of course includes the ICC.

A conservative assessment of the impact of this change is that there will be an increased pressure on the Court's budget next year of some €2 million. In accordance with the stringent measures we have undertaken so far, and in accordance with the attitude we have approached this budget, we have looked at how we can absorb that pressure next year without approaching you for more. So we worked hard over the last few months to identify appropriate measures to cope with this additional pressure. Of course, it is important for us that in finding those resources, we minimise the impact on operations and staff. This has been a difficult exercise and sacrifices have been made, with cancellation of anticipated operational missions, planned trainings, delaying activities, and so forth.

After intensive internal discussions involving all the organs, and careful considerations, we have reached the conclusion *not to* request an addendum to the 2020 budget to cover this additional pressure.

On the basis of the recommended budget by the CBF we estimate that we can – with some risks – cope with this additional pressure without compromising our ability to maintain our priorities.

However, the margins are very fine and they do not leave any flexibility for us to absorb any further reductions to our operational capacity to those already recommended by the CBF.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

I would like to express my gratitude to the facilitator for the budget, Ambassador Marlene Bonnici, of Malta, for the very productive co-operation she has had with the Court during budget discussions, and for her skilful leadership and guidance.

As always, we, the Court, stand ready to provide further information in order to assist this Assembly in discharging its functions.

Thank you.