

COALITION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Statement by the Acting Convenor of the Coalition for the ICC, Ms Melinda Reed

19th session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute
The Hague
Monday, 14 December 2020

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

- It is with honor that I address you today as the acting Convenor of the Coalition for the ICC.
- At this 19th Assembly session, despite this year's unique challenges and the constraints of this session's hybrid nature, we continue to work together as the world's largest civil society partnership for international justice. We continue to participate in this Assembly in large numbers, with 20 activists attending in person through rotating seats and 350 activists following the proceedings online.
- The members of the Coalition appreciate the unique consultative status we have with the Court and the Assembly of States Parties since the very beginning, a status that builds on the recognition of the importance of civil society in the Final Act of the Rome Conference in 1998.
- This allows us to discharge our responsibilities to hold the Court and its States Parties to the norms of fair, effective, and independent justice to which they aspire.
- Consultation also allows us to discharge our responsibilities as a bridge between the Court and the communities its work affects the most, the people for whom justice and accountability matter before, during and after the ICC becomes involved, and for whom convictions and acquittals are but a small part of the story.
- Our relationship with the Assembly helps us to amplify the voices of victims, the voices of survivors, the voices of communities, which in turn may help you understand better the impact of the decisions you take throughout the year but also, and crucially, during the formal sessions of the Assembly.
- We take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dr Felipe Michelini, former Chair of the Trust Fund for Victims, who passed away in April 2020. His dedication to victims, his vision for the Trust Fund and its role in supporting victims, and his commitment to the Rome

Statute system as a whole was and continues to be an inspiration and support for us in carrying out our own work.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

- This year's session is particularly important, with critical elections ahead. As civil society we have diverse views on the elections and the processes leading to them, and the Coalition as a whole does not take a position on specific candidates. Yet we are united in urging you as States Parties to ensure a proactive, fair, informed, and transparent election process for the next ICC Prosecutor, and to elect the most highly qualified candidates in the 2020 judicial elections. These decisions will have a lasting impact in the years to come, especially for the communities affected by the Court's work. It is crucial to get it right and to ensure elections are free from vote trading or any consideration apart from ensuring the Court benefits from the highest quality leadership.
- The Review Process you started last year offers a fresh opportunity to bring states, court officials, experts and civil society closer together in our joint, ongoing effort to strengthen the work of the Court and its ability to serve the communities affected by that work. While we may all have different views on the issues identified by that process, it represents an important step in developing a framework within which we can all support the Court to exercise its mandate over the coming years to its full potential. We call on you, as States Parties, to redouble your efforts to provide the Court with the practical cooperation, political support, and financial resources on which it depends for success.
- The past year has been particularly challenging on many levels, not least due to the unprecedented political attacks against the Court, whose only transgression has been to strive for justice, accountability and redress for victims. We welcome the strong statements of support for the Court by you, its States Parties, and note that while the global political landscape may be changing, there is a need for constant vigilance in order to protect the Court's mandate from unwarranted attacks and interference.
- We stand ready to engage with you and the Court, to share our vision, experience and expertise, our institutional memory – some of us present virtually and in person in this session have been working on these issues well before the Court was established, even well before the Rome Statute was negotiated.
- As civil society, we continue to believe in the Court, and the Rome Statute system and what it stands for, perhaps now more than ever. For that reason, we will continue to engage in constructive and respectful dialogue that - while sometimes critical - seeks solutions to make the system more fair, effective, independent, accessible and accountable.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

- 2020 has been a difficult year, as the global pandemic has devastated countries, communities and individuals, forcing us to adapt to new realities. We have all had to adopt new methods of working and we recognise the efforts of the Court, the Secretariat of the ASP and the ASP itself to ensure not only that the work can continue, but also that the voice of civil society can be heard. Nonetheless, as the year draws to a close, many of us are breathing sighs of relief, with the hopes for better days to come.
- We do, however, ask you to remember that while we may be seeing the light at the end of this particular tunnel, the pandemic has had an impact not only on the world's health, but also on the world's most vulnerable, on their human rights and access to justice, and on the human rights defenders who seek to protect them. The end of 2020 will not be an end to their struggles. We urge you to support, defend and protect human rights defenders and their work in service of the world's most vulnerable people in 2021 and the years to come.
- As civil society, we stand ready to assist you in that endeavour. We stand ready to help strengthen the Court and protect its integrity and independence. We stand ready to help safeguard the Court's authority to give life to the Rome Statute's promise of justice for victims and to end impunity for perpetrators of the crimes that shock the conscience of humankind.

Thank you.