



THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

STATEMENT
(Abridged Version)

by

H.E. MRS NABEELA FARIDA TUNIS

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

at the 19th Session of the International Criminal Court
Assembly of States Parties

Agenda Item:
“General Debate”

The Hague, 14-16 December 2020

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**Mr. President,
Colleague Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives,**

In the most challenging of circumstances we find ourselves as States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, allow me at the outset to commend the leadership of the Assembly of the States Parties and indeed the Court for the remarkable business continuity this calendar year. Much like “*the arc of the moral universe [which may be] long, but [...] bends toward justice*”, the arc of our quest to end impunity for atrocity crimes may face challenges but certainly bends towards justice and accountability, noting the centrality of our permanent International Criminal Court within the Rome Statute system. In this regards, we take note with appreciation of the notable developments in the work of the Court in the past session.

Mr. President,

The Assembly of States Parties and the Court will go through leadership changes this session and allow me to commend the ASP Presidency for your service, leadership and the work accomplished. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Principals of the Court, and express commendation for their unwavering commitment to the Court. As this is the last ASP General Debate during their respective terms in office, allow me to pay tribute to the President of the Court, **Judge Chile Eboe-Osuji**, and the **Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda** for their outstanding contributions to the Court.

Sierra Leone, further cognizant of the imminent leadership changes in the judiciary, duly acknowledges the importance of nominating and electing as judges qualified, competent and experienced persons of the highest quality and of high moral character, impartiality and integrity. In this regard, the Government of Sierra Leone on the recommendation of the autonomous Judicial and Legal Service Commission has nominated **Justice Miatta Maria**

Samba for election as a Judge of the International Criminal Court for the term 2021 to 2030. The Advisory Committee on Nominations (ACN), based on Justice Samba's professional experience and answers during her interview, concluded that **she is highly qualified for appointment as judge of the Court.**

The ACN further acknowledged her extensive and wide-ranging national judicial experience, her service in numerous other functions at the national and international levels, her demonstrable in-depth knowledge of the Rome Statute system and the jurisprudence of the Court. The Committee also cited her considerable and clearly relevant experience in working with witnesses and victims at both the national and international levels, including in the field, as well as her legal expertise on specific issues, particularly violence against women and children. As we approach the elections in the resumed 19th session in New York, Sierra Leone looks forward to your favourable consideration of her candidacy and vote.

Mr. President,

Nominating a highly qualified female candidate with high moral character is demonstrative of Sierra Leone's commitment to the ICC. We, therefore, take this opportunity to restate our *“unwavering support for the Court as an independent and impartial judicial institution”*. Sierra Leone, therefore, continues to reaffirm the great importance we attach to the work of the Court, the effective functioning of the Rome Statute system and our unwavering belief in the necessity of the principle of complementarity.

Linked to our commitment to the Court is our support for its vision as it strives to be *“universal, responsive, flexible and resilient”*, with a consistent outlook towards continuous improvement. In this regard, we welcome the Independent Expert Review of the ICC and the Rome Statute system and the publication of the Final Report by the Independent Expert. Sierra Leone will remain fully engaged constructively as we collectively and transparently proceed to assess the recommendations for implementation.

In closing, **Mr. President**, notwithstanding the challenges and threats to the Court, Sierra Leone remains firmly committed to its mandate, and its status as an independent and impartial judicial institution. This commitment we reiterate is for the victims. At the heart of the work of the Court are the victims, on whose behalf we have this accountability system. We accordingly welcome the participation of more than 11,000 victims in the cases before the Court and commend the **Trust Fund for Victims** for the discharge of its mandate. It is in recognition of the important work of the Trust Fund for Victims that Sierra Leone made a financial contribution as pledged in the 18th Assembly of States Parties meeting. The victims, we believe, must be at the fore and center in all our considerations of the International Criminal Court.

I thank you.