

**Speech by H.E. Mr Nikos Christodoulides,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus
on the occasion of the
20th session of the Assembly of State Parties (ASP) of the Rome Statute of the
International Criminal Court,
The Hague, 6 - 11 December 2021**

Madam President,

It is with great pleasure that I address the twentieth Assembly of States Parties of the Rome Statute. On behalf of the government of the Republic of Cyprus, allow me to congratulate the President, the new Prosecutor of the Court, as well as the judges that were elected during the last session. We wish you every success in your noble and important task and assure you of our support and commitment to promoting the work of the Court and to safeguarding the international justice architecture of which the International Criminal Court is an indispensable part.

The significance of the Court's mission must not be underestimated or undervalued. The continual human rights violations and challenges across the globe render the need for an impartial, effective and efficient accountability mechanism more pressing than ever.

One of the most important areas we all need to focus on is cooperation. The Statue of Rome on which the Court is founded, is based on the principle of complementarity, and is therefore reliant to a large extent, on the cooperation of State Parties. We must not only strive for the universal ratification and full implementation of the Rome Statute — it is also imperative that we safeguard the principles of independence and impartiality that underpin the Rome Statute as a means of achieving universality.

For Cyprus, as a member of the Asia-Pacific group in the United Nations, the universality gap is even more obvious, and we are convinced that the ICC needs to have the strongest possible cross-regional character. In this endeavor, preserving the integrity of the Rome Statute system is essential, especially today given the increase in hostilities and repression worldwide. We need to reaffirm our collective commitment to the goals we set out in 1998 when the Court was established.

Cooperation is not limited to commitments under the Statue of Rome. It also extends to the capacity and capability to adequately deliver international justice. The threats and obstacles faced by the Court are unfortunately both internal as well as external. This is why we believe that the ongoing work of the Review Mechanism will help to strengthen the Court, encourage the development of a healthy working culture, whilst respecting independence and enhancing the credibility, and legitimacy of the Court. How otherwise can misconceptions and attempts to undermine the work and impartiality of the Court be addressed?

Politically, we need to work on increasing acceptance and ensuring greater cooperation between the Court and non-states parties, including the United Nations in order to protect judicial and prosecutorial independence and integrity. The issue of outstanding arrest warrants is particularly important in this respect.

In parallel, we must ensure the availability of adequate financial resources to enable the Court to fulfill its obligations. This means delivering on pledges and commitments. I would like to assure you that, as the current Facilitator for the 2022 budget, Cyprus will act as an “honest broker” to achieve the best end-result, given the need for the Court to deliver upon its mandate, whilst being conscious of the difficult financial environment created by the pandemic, in many States Parties. At the same time, we must not forget the Trust Fund for Victims of atrocities. Cyprus will continue to contribute to this Fund, which we feel is of increasing significance given the assistance it provides to the victims of such heinous crimes.

Madam President,

We cannot stress enough the importance of an impartial and independent International Criminal Court free from interference and able to provide justice, holding perpetrators accountable for grave crimes, including sexual and gender-based violence, violence against children, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. While we have witnessed some positive developments in the past year, most notably the lifting of US economic sanctions and visa restrictions against the Court, we must remain vigilant and collectively renew our commitment to support and protect the International Criminal Court and its mandate.

Thank you.