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**Assembly of States Parties
to the Rome Statute
of the International Criminal Court**

9th Session

General Debate

6 December 2010

Statement by

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Mr. President,

It is a great pleasure for me to speak on behalf of Finland at this ninth Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute. I would like to fully associate my delegation with the statement delivered by Belgium on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to extend the gratitude of my delegation to the Bureau and to The Hague and New York Working Groups as well as the organs of the Court and the Secretariat for their work. I would also like to recognize the NGOs – and the Coalition for the ICC in particular – for their contribution. Furthermore, I thank Ambassador Christian Wenaweser for his leadership as President of the Assembly and as President of the recent Review Conference of the Rome Statute.

Mr. President,

The Kampala Conference was a historic occasion. It brought to a close the long-time efforts of the Special Working Group on the Crime of Aggression and completed the work of the Rome Conference in this regard. The compromise on the definition of crime of aggression and the conditions for the exercise of jurisdiction was truly a milestone in combating impunity for the core crimes under international law.

Moreover, definitions of war crimes in non-international armed conflicts were brought in line with those in international armed conflicts. It is of particular importance that all these amendments were adopted by consensus. This should serve as a yardstick for any future amendments and as guidance for the work of the new Working Group on Amendments.

Mr. President,

In Kampala, the stocktaking on the state of international criminal justice produced key findings that need to be transformed into action by the relevant stakeholders. We are encouraged by the fact that this work is already underway. As a recent example, two seminars were organized at the Court to address issues relating to support and assistance to victims as well as protection of victims and witnesses. These seminars brought together external and internal experts and also drew from the experience of other international criminal jurisdictions.

We are convinced that such discussions will greatly assist the Court in the implementation and future revision of its Strategy in relation to victims. Furthermore, we would encourage States Parties to take advantage of the assessments made in Kampala and to act in support of the Court to enhance its impact on

victims and affected communities. The Trust Fund for Victims has a significant role in such efforts as well, and I want to reiterate here Finland's support to the work of the Trust Fund.

The pledges made at the Review Conference require concrete follow-up. In Kampala, Finland signed an agreement on the enforcement of sentences with the Court. I am pleased to report that the domestic measures required for the entry into force of the agreement proceed on schedule. Moreover, we have fully honored our financial pledges, including continuing support to the Trust Fund for Victims and the LDC Fund.

Mr. President,

The Review Conference created momentum, but further work needs to be done.

We warmly welcome the ratification of the Rome Statute by Bangladesh, Seychelles, St. Lucia and the Republic of Moldova. Today, we are already 114. Universality must remain our goal.

It is equally important that States Parties take the necessary steps in their domestic legal systems to enable full co-operation with the Court, which is the key requirement for the Court to be able to function effectively – and efficiently.

A further significant element of cooperation is mainstreaming the Court's mission in the work of the United Nations and other relevant fora. In this respect, Finland warmly welcomes efforts aimed at strengthening diplomatic support for the Court. Furthermore, the ICC Public Information Strategy offers concrete, innovative and forward-looking measures that also States Parties can undertake.

The Assembly has vital decisions to make at this Session. For one thing, we are to consider the Court's budget for 2011 in the context of increasing financial constraints. We trust that locating optimal savings while at the same time making sure that the Court is able to fulfill its mandate effectively has been the overriding guideline of the Committee on Budget and Finance.

Mr. President,

Concerns have been expressed with regard to the length of the proceedings at the Court. We share the concerns, in particular, from the standpoint of the right of the accused to a fair trial. The underlying reasons are, of course, manifold. As States Parties it is our duty to address such issues, without interfering with the judicial independence of the Court.

The latest omnibus resolutions have already emphasized the importance of electing the most highly qualified judges to the Court. The need to start considering the option contained in Article 36(4)(c) of the Statute has already been mentioned. Another crucial phase is the selection of national candidates. As of the beginning of next year, we will have in Finland a national expert committee assisting the Government in the selection of Finnish candidates for judicial positions in any international court. This new legislation is aimed at increasing transparency and harmonising practices in the Finnish decision-making system.

Mr. President,

As was stated by the President of Finland in the General Debate of the current session of the General Assembly, “justice must always go hand in hand with peace efforts”. We firmly support the Court in its work in bringing to justice those responsible for the most serious crimes. We call on all States to uphold their international legal obligations towards the Court.