



Oswaldo Zavala Giler
Registrar of the International Criminal Court

Speech to the 22th Session of the Assembly of States Parties

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Your Excellency, Vice-President of the Assembly of States Parties,
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

It is my honour to address this Assembly in my capacity as Registrar of the International Criminal Court.

While this 22nd session of the ASP is my first as Registrar, my first session of the ASP was the 4th session in 2005, when I participated as a delegate of the Coalition for the ICC. Later on, I joined the Court itself and have worked for the Court ever since. During this time, I have seen with my own eyes the ICC mature into an international institution of considerable relevance for the international community as a whole. I have seen its mandate permeate the structures and processes that sustain international peace, security and justice.

The success of this institution is something I am wholeheartedly committed to, and I will continue to serve the Court with my utmost dedication and skill.

That success, of course, can only be realised thanks to you, the States Parties. This is your Court. You have created this institution, you sustain it, and the Court is grateful for your political, financial and other support and cooperation throughout all these years.

In this regard, I would like join others before me in welcoming Armenia as the 124th State Party to the Rome Statute. Armenia's ratification is another testament to the Court's continuing relevance in addressing impunity for atrocity crimes.

I see a clear need for a paradigm shift.

We are on the cusp of the new era, that brings with it new challenges, in particular in the area of security of the Court and the threat to its independence.

We are operating now in a much more aggressive environment than the one when the Court was established 25 years ago, carried at that time by the almost unanimous international momentum for accountability and progress.

Because when that abstract pledge to accountability is being turned into reality, challenges and opposition arise. The Court experienced it a few years ago when it was subjected to coercive measures, and it is experiencing it – in even more threatening circumstances – today.

The new environment is pushing us, the Court, to change, and to look into re-evaluating existing risks and seriously examining new ones.

Today, the Court is being targeted. Its operations, its officials and those collaborating with its mandate are being targeted.

Arrest warrants against the Prosecutor and a number of ICC Judges, including the President, have been issued. The Court was subject to an unprecedented cyber-attack a couple of months

ago, the consequences of which are still with us today and will be for the foreseeable future. Last year, the Court prevented, with the help of the Host State, a serious attempt to infiltrate by a hostile state agent.

On our part, the Court and the Registry have been taking stronger, more focused and more strategic efforts to change. Thanks in large part to the Independent Expert Review, we have re-examined our processes and made a number of significant improvements in different areas.

We have made efforts in improving our workplace culture, including through the introduction of two new important functions at the Court, the Ombuds and the Focal Point for Gender Equality.

Earlier this year, for the first time in the history of the Court, four Strategic Plans -of the Court, the Registry, the Office of the Prosecutor and the Trust Fund for Victims- were closely coordinated and published at the same time.

Mr Vice-President,

As I have indicated, we work for an organization that has gone through profound changes in its visibility, its overall impact and, as such, its risks. The culture of the organization has to grow and change to fit into its new environment. But such efforts require guidance, vision and purpose. The challenges ahead, the challenges today, entail a responsibility for those of us leading the institution to set the tone, to lead by example and to do so with clarity, meaning and intent.

Both geographical representation and gender balance are a matter of legitimacy for the Court. The Court serves the international community's pursuit of justice and accountability. The Court thus must be reflective of and fostered by the values, principles and rich experiences of the international community that constitutes it, of the different legal systems of the world. And it must do so with due regard to the diversity of its workforce more broadly, including a balanced gender representation at all levels of its hierarchy.

The composition of the Court's personnel, and the way that composition is perceived, has a direct impact on the credibility of the institution and its operations.

We are adapting ourselves to the new era and have taken a more strategic approach, to make this institution more agile, more efficient and more legitimate.

Together with the President and the Prosecutor, and after thorough consultations with our staff and personnel, we will be launching the Court-wide ICC Core Values early next year. I consider the Core Values of the Court as a platform that must allow the personnel and the organization itself to model behaviour, aspirations and expectations to principles that are organic to our culture. But, it is also important that the organization also crafts values that reflect both the Court's long-term aspirations and its foundations. Indeed, the selection of the

core values should be done with endurance in mind. As such, while addressing and reflecting on present challenges is essential, our values should also possess a timeless quality.

However, our work continues and we cannot do it alone. We are in the middle of the novel challenges.

Security is a fundamental, existential issue. Security is important not only because the Court is ensuring the safety of our witnesses, of our operations, of those collaborating with the Court, and of its officials and personnel. It is also important because the Court's ability to work in a secure manner is essential to its judicial independence. Lack of security impedes the proper implementation of the Court's mandate, and delegitimises the institution.

So, while the Court is painfully aware of the new paradigm shift that is taking place, we need you, the States Parties, to be fully aware of that shift too. We need you to enhance the Court's capabilities to fulfil its mandate, as well as its defences against outside threats.

The relationship between the Court and its States Parties is based on trust. *Your* trust in the Court's ability to fulfil its mandate in an efficient, independent and impartial manner. And *our* continued trust in you, the States Parties, that enable us to do so.

Mr Vice-President,

The Court proposed €200.4 million (including the host State loan of €3.59 million), for the 2024 budget, representing an increase of €27.18 million (15.7 per cent) over the approved budget for 2023 of €173.2 million.

Of this total increase, approximately €15.6 million correspond to fund new requirements across various investigations, trials and judicial activities, while €11.6 million correspond to unavoidable inflationary pressures including the increases in the UN common system costs.

In 2024, resources are needed to run and support trial hearings and the corresponding workload in three cases throughout the year: the Abd-Al-Rahman case, the Yekatom and Ngaïssona case, and the Said case, as well as in the Al Hassan case in the beginning of the year.

The Office of the Prosecutor is expected to carry out active investigations in Afghanistan; Bangladesh/ Myanmar; Darfur; Libya; Palestine; Philippines; Ukraine; and Venezuela I.

The Trust Fund for Victims will be even more active in 2024 than this year. It will continue implementing reparations programmes in the Lubanga and Al Mahdi cases, and will start the full reparations programme stage also in the Ntaganda case, and commence the process for reparations in the Ongwen case. Importantly, early next year the Trust Fund will conclude the first ever full implementation of reparations in the Katanga case.

I fully recognise that these demands have led to a request for a substantial increase. But I can assure you that they have come only after all measures have been taken to, first and foremost,

find savings, efficiencies and reductions to our budget, as well as reprioritisation of resources. In the Registry alone, the total reductions amounted to approximately €5.3 million.

Considering the Court's request for 2024, the Committee on Budget and Finance recommended a net increase of €15.15 million or 8.7 per cent compared to 2023 approved budget of €173.2 million.

Among the recommended reductions, the Committee did not endorse the approval of €3 million in expected additional UN common system costs in 2024, nor the resources requested to ensure the security of our operations.

Mr Vice-President, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

We have a shared responsibility to ensure a sustainable future for the Court.

The Court's responsibility - my responsibility - is to put forward to you requirements that the Court needs to carry out its important mandate, after all measures to find savings and efficiencies have been taken. We have done that.

Your responsibility, as States Parties, is to carefully consider and decide on the Court's requirements. I fully recognise that in the current economic and financial circumstances in many of our States Parties, this is not an easy decision.

My responsibility is also to ensure operational sustainability and the diligent use of the resources allocated by you.

The Contingency Fund was established to ensure prosecutorial and judicial independence. To ensure that in the light of unforeseen developments, when new crimes need to be investigated, or a new arrest warrant implemented, the Court has the resources to implement its mandate. Contingency Fund is therefore much more than a reserve fund. It is directly linked to the sustainability of judicial and prosecutorial independence.

Mr Vice-President,

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the ICC President, Judge HOFMAŃSKI, whose mandate will come to an end soon, for his great leadership and, personally, for his support in my first year as Registrar. Thank you, Piotr, for having been an inspiration, a guide and an example in responsible leadership.

My congratulations to our six newly elected judges. I look forward to ensuring adequate support to your important work ahead.

I would also like to thank the outgoing ASP President, Silvia Fernández de GURMENDI, for her adamant and unwavering support to the Court and the Rome Statute system, as well as outgoing Vice-Presidents, Ambassador RAE and Ambassador SEQUENSOVÁ for their excellent work and coordination in New York and The Hague respectively.

My congratulations to the newly elected ASP President, Ambassador KAUKORANTA, as well as the two new Vice-Presidents, Ambassador KASSANGANA and Ambassador KANU.

My special thanks go to the budget Facilitator, Ambassador MILENKOVIĆ for the productive cooperation, skilful leadership and the many efforts in addressing multiple and complex budgetary issues, as well as Ambassador DRUML for the important work done by the CBF.

And last but not least my congratulations to the newly elected CBF members with whom I look forward to working in the coming years.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

The challenges the Court faces are serious and threatening. Often, it is with hindsight that we can evaluate our decisions. But if history is what we will tomorrow think of today, responsibility is what we today think of tomorrow.

I am confident that this Assembly will make the right decisions for the future of your Court and your Rome Statute system.

Thank you.