



# CROATIA

Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Ivan Šimonović  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations

at the

22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Assembly  
of the States Parties to the Rome Statute

**-General debate -**

7 December 2023

*- Check against delivery -*

Madam President,

I use this opportunity to express Croatia's gratitude to the President of the Assembly and the members of the Bureau for their important work and we are looking forward to working with new members. *(I also congratulate the newly elected judges.)*

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and its Member States and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Madam President,

Trends are negative. Around the world, atrocity crimes and their victims are on the rise. Accountability is the best form of their prevention. Marking the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, Croatia reiterates its strong support to the International Criminal Court, the first permanent international judicial body in the pursuit of criminal justice.

In order to be able to deliver on its mandate, the Court must be protected from outside interference and pressure. Protecting the neutrality and judicial independence of the Court is paramount to its proper functioning. In addition, to ensure the legitimacy of the Court, we will continue to insist on the importance of appointing the most highly qualified judges to the Court through merit-based elections.

Madam President,

The Rome Statute embodies the conviction that most serious crimes of international concern must not go unpunished. The way forward is to make the Rome Statute system stronger and more effective. Hence, we attach great importance to reviewing the Rome Statute regarding the jurisdictional limitations for the crime of aggression.

To Croatia, the crime of aggression has a special significance, because in the 1990-es, we suffered aggression ourselves, accompanied by war crimes and crimes against humanity. We urge all those States that have not yet done so, to ratify the Rome Statute and all its Amendments. We firmly believe that the efforts to promote the universality of the Rome Statute can contribute to the prevention of mass atrocities.

We also highlight that the role of the ICC is to complement instead of replace existing national judicial systems. Therefore, all States Parties need to adopt effective national legislation to implement the Rome Statute and to reinforce their national capacities.

It is important that the Court continues to cooperate closely with other international mechanisms established to ascertain facts related to alleged violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We will continue to support various efforts to gather evidence, facilitating future legal action.

Madam President,

The fight against impunity is crucial for the prevention of atrocity crimes and for providing justice for their victims. In these challenging times, we should redouble our efforts to make the ICC truly universal and resilient.

I thank you.