

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF GHANA’S DELEGATION AT THE
TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES
(ASP) TO THE ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL
COURT (ICC) AT THE UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS IN
NEW YORK, FROM 4TH – 14TH DECEMBER, 2023**

Madam President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to convey Ghana’s appreciation to Her Excellency, Judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi and the bureau for the sterling leadership they have provided States Parties during her tenure and in particular throughout the year for the diligent work done in guiding the proceedings of the Twenty-Second Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute. In the same vein, I welcome the election of His Excellency, Mr. Ilkka-Pekka Similä, and Ambassador of Finland as the President of the Twenty-Third Session of the Assembly of States Parties and congratulate all new office holders of the Bureau. I assure you of the full support of my delegation for a successful conference and of your tenure. My appreciation also goes to the President of the Court, Judge Piotr Hofmanski, as well as to the Secretariat, for the excellent work done in the management of the affairs of the Court.

Madam President,

At the onset of the creation of the Court, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan of blessed memory said, “**This cause ... is the cause of all humanity**”. After more than 25 years of its existence, this assertion by the late Kofi Annan continues to provide us with the clear directional path and undergirding philosophy for the Court. It is in this light that, Ghana cherishes and remains committed to the principles and ideals of the Rome Statute for **addressing** atrocity crimes thereby deterring potential perpetrators of such heinous crimes. We will continue to work assiduously with the Court through its organs to ensure the continuing realisation of the ends of justice and accountability.

It is worth noting that, since its inception, the International Criminal Court has helped to deliver justice to victims around the world and to deter the gravest atrocity crimes thereby promoting the norms of international criminal justice. While these are commendable, the Court is still faced with challenges, as international peace and security continue to be threatened incidents of armed conflicts around the world with their attendant violations that may amount to crimes under the Rome Statute.

As we encounter new challenges, what is required more than ever is for States Parties and relevant stakeholders to continue to invest their efforts to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Court to better fulfil its mandate and ensure greater accountability for atrocity crimes.

The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute in New York and Syracuse was auspicious in enhancing visibility of the Court while encouraging greater accession of non-States Parties to the Statute. To that end, we underscore the importance of universal ratification of the Rome Statute in furtherance of universal jurisdiction of the ICC and call on States not yet Party to the Rome Statute to accede to it. We call for continuing sensitisation on the principles of the Statute and the responsibilities of the Court for greater understanding by peoples of the world.

Madam President,

Concerning Africa and the ICC, Ghana continues to advocate for dialogue and engagement in addressing the challenges the Court is confronted with, particularly, the strengthening of relations between the Court and African States. To this end, we commend the Court and States Parties for their collaborative efforts at deepening cooperation and complementarity in favour of justice for the victims of atrocity crimes. We commend the President of the Court Judge Piotri Hofmanski for establishing channels of effective communication with the African Union Commission for mutually beneficial engagement and constructive collaboration.

Ghana has always strongly supported the key pillars and principles underpinning the Rome Statute, namely, complementarity, cooperation, independence and

impartiality of the Court. We affirm the need for effective operationalisation of the principle of complementarity in furtherance of the full realisation of the objectives of the framers of the Rome Statute at the national level. In this regard, we commend the Court's activities and impact in the Central African Republic and President Hofmanski's working visit to Bangui in 2022 to meet with community leaders and victims benefiting from the Trust Fund for Victims.

We call for more of such complementarity initiatives of the Court and effective partnerships with local authorities in enhancing the capacity of national jurisdictions in dealing with the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

My delegation also commends voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for Victims of Crimes of the Rome Statute in furtherance of restorative justice.

Ghana welcomes the opening of preliminary investigations into several situations outside the African continent by the Court and the establishment of the Office of the Prosecutor offices abroad. This development and its visible outcomes could help dispel the perception that the Court unduly concentrates on Africa since the notable crimes under the Statute remain international crimes regardless of the geographical region of the commission of such crimes. The Court must be seen to have its searchlight everywhere and must be seen to be responsive to atrocity crimes committed anywhere without equivocation.

Madam President,

Ghana commends the ongoing Review of the ICC and the Rome Statute system focusing on the clusters of issues of Governance, the rules and procedures of the Court as well as investigations and prosecutions. My delegation lauds the Group of independent Experts for their efforts and submission of their comprehensive report. It is our hope that States Parties, focal points, specialised working groups, organs of the Court and all stakeholders would keep up the momentum for the effective implementation of the recommendations to ensure that the Review process is successful in enhancing the efficient performance of the Court and the Rome Statute system.

I acknowledge the support of the International Criminal Court in the activities of the Africa Centre of International Criminal Justice (ACICJ) at the GIMPA Law School in Ghana. The Centre, which was established in May 2017, is dedicated to the promotion of international criminal law and justice in Africa and the world, in particular through research, capacity building, seminars and advocacy. The Centre has already proven its worth as it has emerged as a preeminent centre on legal scholarship and training in the field of international criminal justice. The visit of President Hofmanski to the Centre in September 2022 is yet further testament to the continuing invaluable contribution and commitment of the Court to the development of the Centre in Ghana.

Madam President,

On Organisational Governance, my delegation wishes to stress the importance of ensuring fairness and equity in the recruitment of staff of the Court in as wide geographical and gender balance basis as possible based on the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. This will no doubt give equal opportunity to competent nationals of all States Parties to bring their varied experiences and perspectives to bear at the Court to enhance institutional efficiency while ensuring impartiality in the workings of the Court.

In conclusion, **Madam President**, permit me to express my delegation's appreciation to the Government and People of the Royal Kingdom of the Netherlands for their continuous support in hosting the Court in The Hague. Our appreciation also goes to the United Nations for hosting the Twenty-Second session.

I thank you for your attention.