

Statement on behalf of the Republic of Lithuania

by

Ms. Gabija Grigaitė-Daugirdė, Vice-minister of Justice

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Madame President of the Assembly,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While aligning with the statement by the European Union,

it is a great privilege for me to address the Assembly in the national capacity of Lithuania.

First of all,

I would like to reiterate Lithuania's continuous and unwavering support to the International Criminal Court.

We strongly condemn any threats against the Court and its personnel,

in particular, arrest warrants issued by the Russian Federation against officials of the Court.

Lithuania stands firmly by the Court with full confidence in its crucial role.

Today we discuss the future of the International Criminal Court at the headquarters of the United Nations,

the principal institution for defending international peace and security, human rights and freedoms.

The aggression against Ukraine is a test case for everything that United Nations and International Criminal Court were established to stand for: peace, justice and accountability for international crimes.

Power to break the rules

does not take from us the power to respond

by law and overcoming aggressors' expectations of inaction.

When international law becomes hostage of the aggressor state in the UN Security Council,

all hopes for international justice are vested in judicial institutions, such as International Criminal Court,

because there is no immunity from international criminal law.

Therefore,

understanding that international crimes shall not go unpunished

obliges us to continuously strengthen the capacities of the International Criminal Court in exercise of its jurisdiction,

and at the same time obliges us

to reconsider the Court's role and jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. Lithuania calls the Rome Statute states to address this issue and commits itself to participate and support the process for renegotiation of Court's jurisdictional limits over the crime of aggression.

However, aggression that Russia continues to wage against Ukraine

demand a legal response now.

That is why, Lithuania has been constantly advocating for the establishment of an international criminal tribunal for the aggression against Ukraine.

We do have understanding that establishment of such Special Tribunal is vital for ensuring that the crime of aggression does not go unpunished, whether it takes place in Ukraine, or elsewhere.

Universal reach of the International Criminal Court is crucial for its effectiveness and impact, but only coherent accountability approach consisting of the Special Tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine, together with necessary changes in the Rome Statute can bring us closer to the dream justice.

I truly believe that all the discussions around the crime of aggression bring us one step closer to the universality of the International Criminal Court

as institution of the last resort for all international crimes being committed around the world.

Law used to fall silent in times of war,

the ICC made it clear that international criminal law does not.

The justice for thousands of victims of international crimes must be real, because international crimes are concepts with legal consequences.

Arrest warrants do demand courage from the Court, and I commend the Prosecutor for his active role and encourage to continue in the same vein.

Now the courage and political will is needed from all of us to make sure that justice does have the possibility to become visible.

Let me also address a few more issues concerning engagements of states.

First, I call for the strong and sustainable financial support for the International Criminal Court. The justice has costs, and we must cover them. Therefore, Lithuania fully supports increase in the budget of the Court.

Second, the ICC entered uncharted area while issuing arrest warrant against the head of Russia, for this reason the Court has to invest in the additional means for making sure that all the sensitive data of investigations is duly protected.

Third, I call the Assembly for a victim-centered approach, to support every instrument and initiative which puts the rights, dignity, safety, and well-being of victims at the forefront.

Fourth, at this Assembly we are community with the same values, therefore expectations for justice of every region, every country and for every situation are important, because sustainable justice can work only with the same standards and guarantees across the regions.

To conclude, let me assure Lithuania's deep commitment to all the initiatives strengthening the International Criminal Court.

International Criminal law is the peace project.

Therefore, the responsibility to defend peace and justice, to protect human rights and to work towards safe future is our main goal, rooted in our own difficult history.

But even during years of occupation Lithuania has never lost faith in international law and will continue working towards restoring trust in international law and justice, because from our history we know

that the time and the right moment is of essence for justice.

Thank you.