

**INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

**TWENTY SECOND SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES  
PARTIES**

**GENERAL DEBATE**

**Statement by**

**Mr. Mateus Kowalski**

**Head of the International Law Department**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal**

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**Please check against delivery**

Madam President,  
Distinguished Delegates,

It is with great honor that today Portugal addresses the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for your commitment to the Rome Statute system along all these years, and particularly for the able manner you led this Assembly.

Portugal would also like to convey its appreciation to the outgoing judges for their devoted service to the Court in particularly demanding circumstances.

These are times of renewal. Portugal would like to congratulate the President-elect of the Assembly of States Parties for her election. Ambassador Kaukoranta, you may count with Portugal's full and active cooperation.

Allow me also to congratulate the newly elected judges. We are confident of their positive contribution to the work of the Court and to international justice in general.

Finally, Portugal also wishes to acknowledge the important role that civil society plays in the Rome Statute system since the beginning.

Madam President,

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Rome Statute, the International Criminal Court is a fully established judicial organization, whose important role is today widely acknowledged. Of course, there is still room for improvement, which should continue to drive our full commitment.

Nevertheless, the Court is undoubtedly today a stronger judicial entity, with investigations in different regions of the world, and a beacon of the fight against impunity, thus contributing to a lasting and sustainable peace. Those responsible for atrocious crimes, regardless of their power and status, learned that they will no longer

be able to hide behind the shield of impunity. Victims can aspire to justice and reparation.

It is, in a way, due to this increasing relevance that the Court faces today unprecedented attacks and threats directed at it and at its officials, by those who seek to disrupt its vital role and undermine the international criminal justice system. Such actions deserve our strongest condemnation. They cannot be tolerated and they shall not deter us.

Portugal stands by the International Criminal Court, as a strong and independent judicial institution. We are committed to cooperate during this session in seeking to provide the Court with the resources it needs to efficiently and sustainably address the challenges it has before it and to continue to live up to the important responsibilities and expectations that fall upon the Court.

Madam President,

We celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rome Statute at a time in its existence when it has never seemed more appropriate to emphasize the importance of the role of the International Criminal Court.

As conflicts unfold in different geographies, we are confronted with situations that seriously disturb the common conscience of humanity and the values enshrined in the Rome Statute and which we all collectively share.

We reaffirm our support for the consistent implementation of the Court's mandate across the situations and cases under its jurisdiction in the interests of justice and the rights of victims. Accordingly, we count on the Prosecutor and his Office to investigate all situations under the jurisdiction of the ICC. We trust the Court to bring justice wherever and to whoever required.

Madam President,

The twenty-five years of the Rome Statute should also emphasize our responsibility towards building an ever more robust international criminal justice system.

Although the Rome Statute provides for four core crimes, the exercise by the Court of its jurisdiction over the crime of aggression remains too restricted. The “supreme international crime” seems in fact to be a crippled limb of the Rome Statute system.

The investigation and prosecution of the crime of aggression mostly exists as a theoretical possibility. This contributes to discrediting and weakening the Court. The accountability gap, in what concerns the crime of aggression, must therefore be addressed.

Portugal, together with others, is committed to filling this gap and we call upon all States Parties to consider initiating joint work towards amending the Rome Statute in order to put the crime of aggression in the same footing as the other three core crimes. The Court needs to be capable of intervening to ensure that also acts of aggression do not go unpunished.

Madam President,

Integrity and universality of the Rome Statute remains – and will remain – a fundamental priority for Portugal. We thus take this opportunity to congratulate Armenia for having recently ratified the Rome Statute.

Madam President,

To conclude, we would like to recall that the Court is as stronger as the commitment and cooperation of States Parties with the Court.

We pledge once more the strong support of Portugal to the International Criminal Court and affirm our commitment to working with you and every delegation towards a successful session of this Assembly of States Parties.

Thank you, Madam President.