



STATEMENT BY

H.E. MIRJAM BLAAK SOW
AMBASSADOR TO THE BENELUX COUNTRIES
AND THE EU

TWENTY- SECOND SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF
STATES PARTIES TO THE ROME STATUTE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

7TH DECEMBER 2023

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK
(Check against delivery)

The President of the Assembly of States Parties;

Heads of Delegations and Representatives of States Parties;

Honourable Judges of the International Criminal Court;

The Prosecutor and the Registrar of the ICC

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Madam President,

On behalf of my delegation, I take this opportunity to congratulate you for steering the business of this Assembly, and upon successfully completing your mandate. We wish you the very best in your future endeavors.

I also take the opportunity to congratulate the incoming ASP President and the newly elected judges and wish them success in the execution of their important mandate.

Madam President,

Allow me to reiterate Uganda's unwavering commitment to the fight against impunity within her borders, and beyond.

Unfortunately, the indicted Joseph Kony, Leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is still a fugitive who needs to

be brought to justice. We wish to appeal for more resources, military, financial and political to apprehend Joseph Kony and bring him to the Court.

Madam President,

We welcome the judgment of 15th December 2022 in the Mr. Dominic Ongwen case. It is our hope that the victims can move on to the reparations phase.

We appeal to States Parties to consider increasing resources to support the work of the **Trust Fund for Victims** so that we can make justice achievable and meaningful.

Madam President,

International justice is costly. Yet, as States Parties, we are continually asking more of the Court without matching these demands with a commensurate growth in the budget. We call upon this Assembly to commit to the Court's global mandate by providing the Court with financial, political and practical support.

It could be said that it is not the Court's place to comment on a situation it is investigating. That is a valid argument if

this were true in all investigations. In fact, we see the Office of the Prosecutor very active in some situations, with an overabundance of statements and declared engagements. Then, we have the right to ask why? Why are situations, which have been with the court for years not allocated due attention and resources?

Why are situations characterized by impunity and continued crimes, not a top priority for the Court? Why are the most documented and protracted situations of crimes and impunity in modern history sidelined and underfunded?

Why is access to the Court restricted to victims of current situations when the Court's door is wide open to others?

The Prosecutor must take all necessary steps to ensure that No victims of Rome Statute Crimes should be left feeling secondary to others and this should be reflected in the way that we respond to all catastrophic situations as long as our mandate permits the Court's intervention.

Madam President,

My delegation together with African States Parties, has made several statements and pronouncements on the **re-allocation of seats in the Committee on Budget and Finance (CBF)** to reflect actual geographical representation as required by the Rome Statute. The Bureau was specifically requested to take corrective action on the distribution of seats in the CBF. We welcomed that decision in December 2022, to establish the Working Group on the composition of the CBF. However, we deplore the fact that this injustice has not been addressed.

Madame President,

With respect to **Geographical Representation and Gender Balance (GRGB)** Uganda joins the African group to request that the Assembly should take the required time to understand the issues and address them effectively, than rush into a decision that will exacerbate the imbalances within Court. My delegation will have significant difficulties to agree to a costly experiment that may solidify a status quo based on exclusion and underrepresentation.

The delegation of Uganda has led the discussions on the GRGB in the court and in this process, we have discovered several concerns that we believe should be addressed

urgently. The Court took inordinate time (6 months) to share a roadmap for the **tenure policy**, and then barely engaged State Parties in the preparation of its proposed Amendments to its staff rules and regulations. The only substantive presentation of the Court's proposal took place on 22nd November 2023 – less than two weeks before this Assembly. Critical feedback on proposals from States Parties were introduced very late and could not be sufficiently appreciated because of the rush to meet the January 2024 deadline.

The approach being proposed by the Court on the introduction of tenure policy is therefore, unwarranted, to say the least. An exhaustive engagement of the Court's proposed amendments should have been heard considering the deep operational and financial impact on the system. Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

Madam President,

My delegation reiterates its support for the **Independent Expert Review (IER) report** and looks forward to reflecting on the progress made on implementing the

recommendations, especially those ones that required “drastic action” such as addressing gender parity and geographical diversity gaps in high level positions, improving the efficiency of the court and dealing with predatory behavior at the Court. The disproportionate representation in high-level positions from other regions but Africa, is of major concern to us. The systemic failure to recruit Africans at high levels indicates a clear failure to implement geographical distribution.

This should be addressed promptly. Uganda joins the African Group which has been left with many concerns, especially where evidence suggests that selection processes are compromised to accommodate unqualified and ineligible candidates from other regions, over and above highly qualified and experienced African candidates. This glaring injustice must stop forthwith.

Madame President,

I now wish to address the issue of **recruitment of senior staff from Non-States Parties**. This is a very serious concern for States Parties because such senior personnel are given decision making powers which should be the

preserve of States Parties. Needless to mention that Non-States Parties do not contribute to the budget. This is very disturbing.

Uganda is proud to be a co-facilitator together with Australia on the important **cornerstone of international criminal justice, namely** complementarity.

Madam President,

Allow me to conclude by reiterating my country's continued support for the Court and by wishing everyone here great deliberations for the coming week.

I thank you.