



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Twenty-third Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

General Debate

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National Statement of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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Madame President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates. I welcome this opportunity to address the Assembly on behalf of the Government of the United Kingdom.

Madame President,

The United Kingdom is a resolute supporter of international law, international accountability, and the International Criminal Court.

The UK recognizes and congratulates the Court on its progress this year. The Court's successes should be celebrated.

We congratulate the Court's six new judges on their election to the bench, as well as Judge Akane on her election as President of the Court, and Judges Aitala and Alapini-Gansou as Vice-Presidents. We thank the outgoing Director of the Secretariat of the Assembly, Renan Villacis, for his long service to the Assembly and the ICC.

We are glad to note that the Court concluded the al-Hassan trial, resulting in convictions for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Court has made significant progress across other investigations.

We commend the work of the Trust Fund for Victims, seeking to ensure that the interests of victims are considered at all stages of ICC proceedings. We note the reparations order in the case of Dominic Ongwen and the challenges and opportunities ahead in identifying eligible victims and securing funding.

As the Prosecutor noted in his remarks at the opening of this Session yesterday, over the last year the Office of the Prosecutor has applied for more warrants than ever before in the history of the Court, and reached similar milestones in the collection of evidence. We commend the dedication of the Court's staff, not just in the OTP but across the board, in this difficult work. We also note that these developments could not happen without the cooperation of States Parties under the Rome Statute.

We also welcome the significant steps the Court has taken towards universality over the past year. We welcome the Republic of Armenia to this Assembly, joining the Court in February this year; and we greatly look forward to welcoming Ukraine as the Court's 125th State Party in the New Year. As an Assembly, we should all look to deeper cooperation and partnership with both of these new States Parties.

Madame President,

The world in 2025 will remain a volatile place, and the pressure on the Court to investigate, prosecute and render judgments will only increase. The expectations and aspirations of States Parties, victims and civil society have never been higher.

It is right that we have high expectations of our Court. Yet we must not ask the Court to go beyond meeting its existing mandate set out in the Rome Statute. The UK firmly believes that States Parties must support the Court as it stands now, before asking it to go further. This is particularly relevant where going further risks fragmenting the international criminal justice system or moving beyond existing agreement among States Parties.

The Court's work load is already a monumental endeavour and the need for international accountability has arguably never been greater. So we note with clear-eyes that the collection of evidence and the issuance and unsealing of arrest warrants will not necessarily result in a clear pipeline of trials. It is incumbent on all States Parties to consider how we work together with the Court to address such challenges.

At this testing time for the Court, States Parties must stand united in our categorical support for the Court, the Rome Statute, and the international rule of law. The UK is unequivocal that it will respect and uphold the independence of the Court. This support is hardened in the face of a range of attacks upon the Court, not least the major cyber attack carried out in 2023.

Madame President,

Against the context of these successes and challenges, the United Kingdom trusts that States Parties will agree to provide the Court with the funding it reasonably needs – particularly with respect to security – to ensure that the Court has the capacity to deliver on its mandate and meet the expectations of States Parties.

We are also clear that there are ways to cooperate with and support the Court in addition to the budget. The United Kingdom is proud to be facilitating secondees in the Office of the Prosecutor, and is also a partner for the Court in sentence enforcement and witness protection – areas where the Court requires more States Parties to enter into such arrangements to provide deeper support.

The United Kingdom remains firmly committed to the foundational Rome Statute principle of complementarity. We continue to demonstrate this through our work with US and EU partners to support Ukraine's Office of the Prosecutor General. Ukraine's investigations and prosecutions of atrocity crimes committed since Russia's illegal invasion, supported by the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group, underpin the Rome Statute system and preserves the ICC as a court of last resort.

The relationship between the Court and States Parties is symbiotic – it requires a great deal of trust and hard work on both sides. And so, while there is much that States Parties can do for the Court, the Court can reciprocate by taking on board feedback from States Parties. We share States Parties concerns at the length of time taken in IOM investigations, the lack of transparency amongst the Trust Funds, and slow progress in improving workplace culture.

Having said all that, Madame President,

The United Kingdom commends the progress the Court has made in 2024 in delivering its mandate in spite of efforts to undermine its independence and impartiality.

We also thank you, Madam President, for your impressive leadership of the Assembly over the last year.

Our support for the Court and for its independence is resolute, and the United Kingdom remain committed to the effective functioning of this vital pillar of the judicial order.

Thank you.