

**General Debate Statement by H.E. Kweon Ki-hwan**  
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**23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute**  
**The Hague, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 *check against delivery***

Madam President, honourable Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is a profound honor to address this Assembly on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea, reaffirming Korea's unwavering commitment to the International Criminal Court.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you, Madam President, in your capacity as President of the Assembly, as well as to the team of the Bureau, the Working Groups, and the Secretariat of the Assembly for all the excellent work in preparing for this 23<sup>rd</sup> Session.

My delegation also commends the joint efforts of the Presidency, the Chambers, the Office of the Prosecutor, and the Registry for their unwavering dedication and diligence in handling an impressive workload over the period from 23 August 2021 to 31 July 2024. During this time, the Chambers issued 532 written decisions, a combined total of over 16,000 victims participated in cases before the Court, and the Court received more than 4,500 new victim application forms. These figures reflect the extraordinary efforts undertaken by

the Court to uphold justice and ensure meaningful participation for victims.

At the outset, I would like to reaffirm that Korea supports and respects the Court's independence, impartiality and integrity. We have consistently worked in cooperation to ensure that the ICC develops into a fair and efficient international criminal court.

Madam President,

In the face of complex crises, the pursuit of international criminal justice faces numerous challenges. In this context, I must draw attention to the one of the gravest challenges we face – deeply troubling alignment between North Korea and Russia.

Today, as the war against Ukraine continues into its third year, North Korea has gone beyond supplying weapons and munitions—it has now deployed at least eleven thousand troops, including special forces, to aid Russia's illegal war of aggression. This reckless military collusion is not only a blatant violation of international law and multiple UN Security Council resolutions but also a direct assault on the global order we are here to defend.

North Korea must recognize that the accountability of its actions extend beyond the regime itself, placing individuals at risk under international criminal law. Based on the specific actions of the North Korean military forces, such individuals may be prosecuted for war crimes or crimes against humanity. The Republic of Korea therefore urges North Korea to abandon this dangerous path, to cease its military adventurism, and to withdraw its troops immediately.

In moments like these, the international community must stand firm. Our shared duty is clear: to safeguard the principles of international justice against such unlawful practices. As the Rome Statute reminds us, “the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole must not go unpunished.” We must hold fast to this commitment.

Madam President,

The Republic of Korea firmly believes that the success of the ICC depends on the respective roles of the Court and its States Parties. To this end, we remain dedicated to supporting the Court’s work and enhancing its effectiveness within the framework of the Rome Statute.

I would like to congratulate Poland for signing an Agreement on the Enforcement of Sentences with the ICC today. On this occasion, I am

also pleased to announce that the Republic of Korea has become the first State Party in the Asia-Pacific region to conclude an Agreement on Enforcement of Sentences with the Court. This milestone reflects our commitment to fostering deeper collaboration and setting an example of meaningful engagement.

As an *ad country* focal point on Universality, we welcome Armenia as a new member of this Assembly and look forward to Ukraine joining as a State Party in 2025. In this spirit, we invite you to our side event on universality later today—a collaborative effort with our partners from the Netherlands, the Coalition for the ICC, and the Parliamentarians for Global Action.

Moreover, we recognize that the Court's legitimacy depends on its efficiency and fairness. We expect the ICC to exercise prudence in resource management, balancing the financial constraints of States Parties with the need for operational effectiveness. At the same time, we support essential investments that enable the Court to meet its mandate, including maintaining the full bench of 21 judges.

Next year marks a significant moment for the Rome Statute, with the Review Conference on the crime of aggression set to convene. We thank the government of Belgium for its leadership in coordinating

this effort, and pledge our active participation to ensure it becomes a milestone for strengthening international justice.

Madam President,

In closing, let me reaffirm the Republic of Korea's steadfast commitment to the ICC and the principles of the Rome Statute. Together, through dialogue and determination, we can advance the cause of justice and accountability for the benefit of humanity.

Thank you. /END/