



INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

TWENTY-THIRD SESSION

OF

THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES

GENERAL DEBATE

Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Clara Nunes dos Santos

Ambassador of Portugal in The Hague

THE HAGUE, DECEMBER 2024

Please check against delivery



Madam President,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is for me a great honour to address the twenty-third Assembly of States Parties of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on behalf of Portugal, as Ambassador of Portugal in The Hague, the home of the International Criminal Court.

Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered by Hungary on behalf of the European Union and its Member-States. We would like to further highlight some aspects of relevance to us.

Madam President,

Please allow us to begin by giving a word of appreciation to you, for your work as President of the Assembly of States Parties. We wish also to thank the ASP Secretariat and its former Director, Renan Villacis, for the immense contribution in facilitating the important functions of this Assembly. We wish Mr. Villacis all the best for his future endeavours.



Let me congratulate, as well, the new President of the Court, as well as the judges elected during the last session of the Assembly. We are confident of their positive contribution to the work of the Court and to international justice and peace in general.

Portugal would like, also, to commend the Office of the Prosecutor for the launch of its Policy on Slavery Crimes, yesterday.

Madam President,

Portugal takes this opportunity to welcome the newest State Party, Armenia, and to congratulate Ukraine for having recently ratified the Rome Statute.

Integrity and universality of the Rome Statute remain – and will remain – a priority for Portugal.

Madam President,

We stand here, today, at a time where, once again, the resilience of the ICC is being put to the test by the challenges resulting from conflicts affecting the world and a particularly tense political context.



We regret and denounce any threats or any sanctions against the Court and its officials, which we considered to be a serious interference in the independence and impartiality of an international court and to jeopardize the exercise of its functions.

Nevertheless, it is our strongest belief that, with the support of all of us, the Court will prevail as a stronger international judicial entity, in fighting against impunity. Its role in contributing to a lasting and sustainable peace is not negotiable and needs to be preserved. Our collective resolve is crucial to protect not only the Court but also the values and principles it represents.

Madam President,

The Review Mechanism has come to its conclusion, this year, and Portugal welcomes the efforts made both by the Court and States Parties to address the Independent Experts' recommendations.

It is our belief that this process leads to an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Court, as well as to a better overall perception of the ICC and of its fundamental role. It is important that



we remained seized of this matter and continue our discussions on some outstanding topics.

Madam President,

This year, the ASP will decide on a Review Conference, in 2025, to review the amendments on the crime of aggression, as foreseen in the compromise adopted in Kampala. Portugal sees this Conference as the opportunity to harmonize the ICC's jurisdiction over all four of the Rome Statute's core crimes and is deeply engaged in this process. Current times have shown the need for the Court to have all means to fully exercise its jurisdiction over this crime.

Madam President,

Humanity has witnessed too much large-scale violence, suffering and destruction, over the years. Since long ago, the World has been saying "never again", voicing for lasting peace and justice.

Removing the causes of violence, fighting impunity and reaffirming core values and principles that underpin the idea of human dignity



are crucial to our common future. Much is being done. And there is no doubt that the Court has a core role in this historical mission.

Countering impunity by the ICC has a deterrent effect at domestic, regional and international levels and has become a fundamental tool to prevent further perpetrations of serious crimes.

States Parties, together with the ICC, must continue striving to reach these goals and contribute to bringing to justice the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole.

Since the ICC has a complementary nature, it is always important to keep in mind criminal jurisdiction over those responsible for such crimes primarily starts and lays with States and their national jurisdictions.

Portugal takes this opportunity to acknowledge the important role that civil society plays towards this end.

Madam President,



Allow me to conclude my statement by reiterating Portugal's full support to the ICC in steadily pursuing its difficult but crucial mission: preventing international law violations, countering impunity, ensuring accountability, providing reparation and enabling reconciliation. We owe it to the victims and to the coming generations.

We pledge our full commitment to working with you, and other delegations towards a successful twenty-third session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute.

Thank you, Madam President.