



STATEMENT BY

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REPUBLIC OF THE GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA**

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

3rd DECEMBER 2024

The President of the Assembly of States Parties;
Heads of Delegations and Representatives of States Parties;
Honourable Judges, the Prosecutor, the Registrar and other
Principles of the ICC,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Madam President,

On behalf of my delegation, and my country, I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madame President and other Principles of the Court, for successfully conducting the business of this Assembly.

Madam President,

We look back at 1998 when nations gathered in Rome, to establish the ICC and note that the mood could not have been more optimistic then. The Berlin wall had collapsed, Nelson Mandela was released from prison, and apartheid defeated.

We witnessed the Security Council creating the ad hoc international criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda respectively. A shocked international community, alert to manifestations of impunity and gross human rights violations, responded with mechanisms to defeat it.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone and The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts for Cambodia were also created to respond to global catastrophes.

Madam President,

Today we meet in a totally different atmosphere. A polarised world exudes messages of “Justice A La Carte” with no hesitation. There appears to be no ignominy in identifying ourselves as “us” and “them”. What is good for the goose is no longer good for the gander. It appears that we have invented a new “tango”, which, no longer “takes two to tango”.

This gathering must answer one fundamental question:

Have we lost the momentum of the 26 years, when we could speak with one voice?

It has never been more urgent than now to return to the basics and reflect on why we started this journey at all. To do this lets state the obvious. **No one must be above the law.** The Rome Statute must be implemented to deliver justice to all. We cannot allow the Court to be used to settle scores, especially by non-states parties. “We, the peoples of the world”, must be all of us, not a chosen few.

We cannot afford to pick and choose who deserves justice immediately, and whose situation must wait. By the end of this session, we must determine how we trace our steps back to our original agenda as “we the peoples of the world” as reflected in the Preamble to the Rome Statute. All lives matter and we must move from rhetoric to practice. All situations must be accorded the same treatment.

The Rome Statute is a “set menu” and there is no room for “a La Carte”, it is Justice for all, and we must leave no one behind.

Madam President;

I turn now on how we can boost The Trust Fund for Victims. As the first country to make a referral to the Court, we welcomed the Court's largest reparations order to date, for €52.4 million in the Dominic Ongwen case. This money will benefit more than 40,000 victims. By all measures, this is the largest number of victims ever to be considered for reparations. We are grateful to the Trust Fund for Victims, the Office of Public Counsel for Victims, the Victims Participation and Reparations Section, the Kampala Field Office and all partners who have cooperated with the Government of Uganda in reaching out to the victims and affected communities to enable them meaningfully participate in the process.

Madam President;

Our expectations regarding the Ongwen Reparations Decision have been moderated by the knowledge that the Trust Fund for Victims' coffers, even when fully emptied, would not accommodate all the victims. We are grateful for the special appeal that the TFV launched in June to boost this Fund. We acknowledge the earmarked contributions received from several States Parties for victims of gender based crimes. However, we need to do more. Within our 124 States Parties are ten, or even more States Parties for whom €5,000,000 would not inflict a colossal dent in their humanitarian budget. The easiest way of getting there is having those ten States do the needful. This would go a long way in implementing the Rome Statute's most applauded innovation of putting victims at the centre of the Court's work.

Such an effort must not stop with the Ongwen reparations, but the only way we can move from symbolism and tokenism to proper reparations is when we deliberately choose to give more to the TFV. Incidentally, this amount is a mere fraction of what military interventions require. This is doable, provided we view all victims as equally deserving of justice.

Madam President;

I turn now to the sticky subject of the independence, transparency and accountability of the Court. I join you and all those who have called for the protection of the Court and those cooperating with it against threats and attacks. No elected Official or Court Staff must lose sleep for being unfairly targeted for simply doing his or her job.

The call to protect Staff from threats and attacks is in our view, a double-edged sword. As the ASP continues to promote effective cooperation between States Parties and the Court, the Court, elected officials, and Staff must do their part to act above reproach. One area to watch out for is in the manner in which heads of organs make use of Article 116. Reliance on Article 116 to establish targeted trust funds must not be a gateway for triggering the old adage; “He who pays the Piper calls the Tune”.

Politicising the Court is the fastest way we can destroy its integrity and legitimacy. We reiterate the need for a uniform approach to dealing with crisis situations. If organising a fundraising event is the norm, then it must be organised for all situations without exceptions.

As Co-Facilitators with Ambassador Dr. Greg French of Australia, for the Complementarity and Gender Based Crimes' Working Group, we would like to register our gratitude for the mutual cooperation, hard work and level of dedication devoted to implementing our mandate.

Madam President;

Uganda is also the Facilitator for Geographical Representation and Gender Balance Working Group. While we note the achievements registered in the implementation of the recommendation of the IER (Internal Expert Review) in this regard, more still needs to be done to make the ICC a safe place to work for all genders and nationalities. We call for the recruitment of more women in P4 and above.

Madam President,

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

Thank you.