



**General Debate Statement of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court of the
ASP24**

Madame President, members of the Assembly, dear colleagues,

I am addressing you today on behalf of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC). We are represented at this Assembly of State Parties (ASP) session by more than 200 human rights defenders from all around the world.

Thirty years ago, we came together as a Coalition, with one goal – to support the establishment and operation of an independent, effective and impartial permanent international criminal court. Our mission remains the same today.

This year an escalation of the biggest challenges we have ever faced, threatening the foundations of international justice and the existence of the institution we have created. It creates unprecedented obstacles to civil society doing its work.

International Criminal Court (ICC) Judges and Prosecutors are being subject to sham criminal prosecution by the Russian Federation. The US sanctions against ICC officials, staff, and - I want to stress specifically - civil society organisations cooperating with the Court, create a new threat to the Rome Statute system.

We welcome the strong and principled response of the States Parties that have come together to firmly and without reservations condemn these sanctions, and uphold the promise States made in 1998, which is now not simply a promise but indeed a legal obligation.

The world is watching, victims are watching, and the dynamics of impunity are inescapable: when violence and atrocities are rewarded with power and legitimacy, atrocities become the legitimate way to power.

This is why we ask States Parties to hold fast to their commitments: Giving way now to illegitimate interference in the judicial process “just this once” will not save the Court, it will condemn it forever to being at the mercy of whomever is able and willing to exercise the hardest pressure.

I should add though. This is not just about Russian criminal prosecutions or US sanctions: just as dangerous to the Rome Statute justice architecture are the repeated



and blatant failures of cooperate with the Court, even by States Parties, in open defiance of the legal obligation to execute arrest warrants and other judicial orders by the Court.

These threats are not going away soon, and we cannot wish them away. In the face of threats and attacks, we must ensure the Court has the political support it needs to withstand this difficult season.

Excellencies, earlier this year, we gathered in NY for the Special Session of the ASP on the Kampala amendment. Our members were unequivocal in their view that harmonisation of the Court's jurisdiction over all four core crimes would bridge the current accountability gaps and strengthen not only the ICC as an institution but also the broader Rome Statute system.

So, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. The Court requires your concrete support in order to fulfil the very mandate you bestowed upon it.

This means ensuring the court has a budget which matches its workload, in full respect of its judicial and prosecutorial independence, so it may continue to do its work across situations, undeterred by threats or wavering political whims.

States must fulfil their end of the bargain by ensuring effective cooperation with the Court. We welcome the surrender just yesterday of a suspect in the Libya situation to the ICC. It underscores that it is simply not the case that the Court does not have an enforcement mechanism: States Parties are the enforcement mechanism. Cooperation – effective cooperation - is crucial to the court's success. This is why we welcome the Plenary dedicated to cooperation at this Session of the Assembly. This is also why non-cooperation must carry consequences.

As we have heard from the Reports of the Court, their daily work continues, and we as civil society will continue working on the everyday issues that contribute to the Court's success and ability to discharge its mandate.

We ask that you, the Court and States Parties, show us the same support, so that when this current situation is over, the international justice system will remain standing and can continue its work, with the support of civil society that is so crucial to the Court discharging its mandate to provide justice and redress for victims.

I will end where I began. The current threats against the ICC and those who support and cooperate with it, namely the sanctions that have been issued against our Palestinian



colleagues on the one hand and the restrictions placed on the human rights work of our US colleagues on the other hand, are the biggest challenge in the ICC's history.

We must and we will work to overcome them, not just today and tomorrow, or even next year, but for an unknowable long-haul.

We must stand in support of one another, States, civil society, the Court, other stakeholders, and work together to find sustainable ways to shore up the foundations.