



**Cour
Pénale
Internationale**
**International
Criminal
Court**

Le Président
The President



Judge Tomoko Akane
President of the International Criminal Court

Opening remarks at the 24th session of the Assembly of States Parties

1 December 2025
The Hague

Madam President of the Assembly,
Esteemed delegates,
Civil society representatives,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this 24th session of the Assembly of States Parties on behalf also of First Vice-President Aitala, Second Vice-President Alapini-Gansou and the whole Court.

When I reported on the activities of the International Criminal Court before the United Nations General Assembly on 11 November 2025, the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Ms Annalena Baerbock, stated that the Court “does not act on its own behalf but in defence of the principles of the United Nations Charter to protect us all from the gravest crimes. States Parties therefore cannot remain silent. Indifference will lead to a world in which might makes right”.

We are profoundly grateful to those States Parties which have been actively supporting the Court in the last months, openly or discreetly, lending political backing as well as material aid through their companies which make the operations of the Court possible in the current circumstances. The Presidency has sought to maintain a dialogue with as many States as possible and has travelled to capitals from all regional groups during the past year. We are particularly grateful to those States that have welcomed us and enriched our work with their views. We will continue our diplomatic outreach in the months to come.

The values underlying the Rome Statute, as articulated in the preamble, are common to the entire humanity. Committing to universality is therefore vital to reaffirm those values and thus to strengthen the Court’s legitimacy. The Court will continue its efforts to increase the number of States Parties, and appreciates the commitment of our civil society partners in raising awareness and promoting universal ratification. I believe the issue of regional representation is key in this respect and I encourage this Assembly to continue actively discussing this matter. The Court, for its part, will continue with regional seminars and other universality initiatives.

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Madam President,
Last year, I have recalled before this distinguished Assembly the looming dangers for this noble institution, international law, international justice, and eventually humanity. I have also pledged, on behalf of all women and men who work for the Court, that we would have never given up to coercive measures, threats, sabotage or outrage.

Both the prediction and the proposition came true.

Today, nine elected officials including six Judges have been designated for sanctions by the United States, alongside with terrorists and drug traffickers. Their personal and family lives are being unsettled and their ability to conduct financial transactions disrupted, also in the territories of States Parties, including in Europe.

Nine elected officials, including one third of the Judges, as well as the totality of the ICC Presidency, are subject to arrest warrants issued by the Russian Federation. Just a few days ago, it was reported that the investigative committee completed its investigation, and placed these elected officials on the wanted list. As far as we know, these officials have been indicted and “arrested *in absentia*” and hearings are being held in their absence. This will have an obvious impact on their personal security.

These coercive measures plainly aim at undermining the existence and the reputation of the Court, the integrity of its judicial proceedings and the safety and serenity of its officials. The response of the Court has been absolutely unambiguous. Our independence and impartiality are our polar stars and remain unaffected. Our loyalties are only with the Rome Statute, and international law. The Court has taken several measures to mitigate the impact of these coercive measures and strengthen our resilience. Most of these measures remain confidential to ensure their effectiveness, but I would again like to thank States that are working with us to find solutions.

Let me be explicit. We will never accept any kind of pressures from anyone on issues of interpretation of the statutory framework and adjudication of cases. “Any dispute concerning the judicial functions of the Court shall be settled by the decision of the Court”, reads Article 119(1) of the Rome Statute. We encourage States Parties to resort to timely consultations under the Statute if they identify problems in the execution of requests for cooperation.

The Court also recalls that the Rome Statute provides for legal avenues for States to pursue the values underlying the Charter of the United Nations without infringing on the independence and impartiality of the Court.

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Madam President,

The achievements of the Court this year speak for us unequivocally. In the face of the unprecedented level of workload and amidst the attacks against it, the Court is acting expeditiously and efficiently in all stages of proceedings: investigations, pre-trial, trial, appeals and reparations. I pay tribute to our staff in Chambers, the OTP and the Registry for these results. Everyone is acting with dignity, resilience, professionalism and abnegation. We are all bound together by the awareness of the gravity of the moment and the firm determination to protect, at any cost, the values on which we have solemnly sworn. We consider ourselves accountable to any and all victims,

particularly children and women. We are committed to our mission and thus the duties enshrined in the Rome Statute.

We have provided the full overview of the Court's activities to this Assembly in writing. I will only mention some key developments.

The Pre-Trial Division has issued numerous arrest warrants of great importance and complexity, emanating from several situations across continents. Most of the arrest warrants remain under seal until the Judges decide differently. In any criminal court, confidentiality is key for the orderly conduct of the proceedings, the seriousness of the judicial function and the appearance of independence and impartiality. A new regulation recently adopted by the Plenary of the Judges, which standardises the existing practice of Pre-Trial Chambers, provides that all applications for arrest warrants or summons to appear must be classified as secret or under seal and cannot be revealed. It is for Judges to decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether to make the issuance of arrest warrants public, including in order to interrupt criminal conduct, deter other crimes or maximise opportunities for arrest.

In the Sudan/Darfur Situation, which was referred to the Court by the United Nations Security Council, the Chamber has convicted Mr Abd-Al-Rahman, a leader of a militia, for 27 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes. This case concerned crimes committed in an armed conflict in 2003-2004, which have taken the lives of and forced the fleeing of hundreds of thousands of civilians, including children. Many of those who were displaced were unable to return. 1,600 victims have participated in the trial. We trust this judgement will light a little spark of hope for the many who are suffering in the ongoing conflict at this very moment.

The case against Mr Joseph Kony in the Uganda Situation has marked the first instance of *in absentia* confirmation proceedings at the Court. In the Situation in the Philippines, the surrender of Mr Rodrigo Duterte was the first from the Asia-Pacific region. A new surrender in the Situation in Libya is imminent, and if realised, a new confirmation proceeding will commence.

The Court acknowledges with gratitude the cooperation in the arrest and surrender of suspects of the concerned States. When States cooperate with the Court, regardless of whether they are parties to the Statute, they nurture justice, the rule law and the values that bind humanity together.

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Madam President,

The Court is committed to improve its workplace culture, and the leadership is applying a zero-tolerance policy against harassment, including sexual harassment, as well as discrimination and abuse of authority. The Presidency and the Plenary of the

Judges as well as the Court as a whole take this issue with absolute seriousness. Where we had authority, in line with the legal framework, we have held accountable those who needed to be, including an elected official this year, in order to protect affected staff members, swiftly, impartially and in compliance with due process. The Court is also working to improve its internal systems and processes as well as on the charter of ethics. We have also released court-wide Core Values.

The Court also appreciates the leadership of the Presidency of the ASP, with the States Parties, in line with their authority, on the matter before it.

Everyone must be accountable, elected officials and staff. This, I strongly believe, is essential to protect the Court's resilience and credibility. Staff also deserve that any misconduct or unsatisfactory conduct is dealt with appropriately in line with the applicable framework. I would like to encourage staff to continue focusing on their core duties with serenity, with trust in the applicable processes.

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Madam President,

In my office at the Court, I have a piece of calligraphy with the words of Laozi, a Chinese philosopher from the 6th century BC, which roughly translates to "a grand image does not have form". It means that grand things do not have a shape which our eyes are able to see. We humans tend to focus on things that are immediately before us and, in doing so, we neglect looking at the bigger picture or matters that are of fundamental significance. I respectfully invite all of you to look at the grand image that underpin our work: the cause of humanity and justice, which has no boundaries. They are universal.

Now more than ever, we must turn our eyes to the unseeable suffering of countless innocent civilians. We must redouble efforts to defend human dignity.

I call on States including States not parties to the Statute, and all persons, to stand united with the Court in defence of humanity.

Organisations of civil society have accompanied the Court hand in hand since the very beginning of the fifty-year long process that has led to 17 July 1998 in Rome. We need you more than ever. Your thirst for justice is the thirst of humanity. We know that the current circumstances are also affecting you, but we beg you to continue working for our cause. Better times will come.

To borrow the words of Nelson Mandela, "a winner is a dreamer who never gives up". We must remember that we are all working for a cause, a grand albeit unseeable cause. We must continue to work for this cause, to provide hope for humanity, and to realise a more just world that is free from atrocities, where future generations peacefully coexist.

Thank you very much.

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