

Madam President,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor to address this event to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The adoption of the Rome Statute, in 1998, was the culmination of a long process and a defining moment in international criminal law that represented a new era in the protection and promotion of fundamental rights of individuals and communities.

With the establishment of the ICC, victims regained hope for further accountability and those responsible for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole learned that their acts would not be tolerated and that they would be accountable under international criminal law.

Madam President,

Portugal highlights the work done by the Court in bringing perpetrators of the most serious crimes to justice and providing

justice to victims, as well as its work as a mechanism of restorative justice in post-conflict situations.

Currently, the Court counts with 123 States Parties from all regions of the world. It has an increasing level of activity, most recently due to the group referral by a large number of States of the situation in Ukraine.

This, in our view, is a testimony to the importance given to and hope deposited in this institution by States.

Madam President,

States are at the centre of international criminal justice. The Court has a complementary nature. Jurisdiction over perpetrators starts and lays primarily with States and national jurisdictions. We should, therefore, in the coming years, continue working towards the universality of the Rome Statute.

The role of the ICC is invaluable to the common goal of the international community to end impunity. However, it relies on the cooperation of States to fulfil its mandate and play its part in achieving peace, security and justice.

The Court is, therefore, as strong as the cooperation and support States are willing to offer.

The United Nations also play an important part in helping the Court, namely by referring to the Prosecutor a situation that would otherwise not fall under the jurisdiction of the Court. This is crucial to ensure that justice reaches many victims of war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression.

Madam President,

The ICC, being a human institution, is not without flaws. We must remain committed to having a comprehensive and constructive dialogue and address concerns raised regarding the Court, while respecting its integrity and independence as a judicial institution.

In this sense, Portugal praises the in going Review Process and welcomes efforts made by both the Court and the States Parties to address the Report of the Independent Experts and the recommendations contained therein.

We must continue taking joint action in this matter and maintain a dialogue between all relevant stakeholders throughout this process.

It is our belief that this process can lead, not only to an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Court, but also to a better overall public image of the Court.

Furthermore, we need to reflect on our decision regarding the crime of aggression, especially in light of recent events.

The adoption of the definition and the conditions for the exercise of jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, in 2010, and the activation of the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, in 2017, were two landmark achievements for the Court.

However, it is our understanding, taking into consideration the conflict in Ukraine and the alleged crimes committed, that the time has come to review the decisions that were made at the time and consider placing the crime of aggression at the same level as the other crimes under the Court's jurisdiction.

Madam President,

Before concluding, allow me a brief word to acknowledge the importance of civil society in helping the Court pursuing justice and redress for victims, as well as the importance of victims and witnesses and their participation in the proceedings of the Court.

Madam President,

Portugal reaffirms its commitment to the International Criminal Court and to the values it stands for. We will continue to strongly support the work of the Court, its independence, and its role in ensuring that the most serious crimes of international concern do not go unpunished.

It is our wish that we can continue building on what we have historically started in Rome, in 1998.

Thank you, Madam President.