



S T A T E M E N T

by

H. E. Mr. Miroslav WLACHOVSKÝ

Minister of Foreign and European Affairs
of the Slovak Republic

Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

Commemoration of 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute

*17 July 2023
New York*

Madam President,

At the outset, I would like to thank you and the Secretariat for organizing this commemoration event. I also congratulate all the States Parties, but also all the delegations that participated at the Rome Conference in 1998 for the 25th anniversary of the Rome Statute. Today, by marking the 25th anniversary of the Rome Statute, we celebrate a historic success for the international justice and rule of law. At the same time, this special occasion allows us to reflect on the quarter of a century of the Rome Statute's existence.

The adoption of the Rome Statute in July 1998 presents a monumental achievement of the international community. Had it been today, I am afraid that the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court would not be a reality. This being the case despite grave international crimes being committed all over the world and despite the fact that the Rome Statute and the Court embody our common values of justice, humanity and rule of law. Treaties such as the Rome Statute require specific geopolitical context that prompts States to demonstrate their strong commitment to the common good, join forces and put aside their national positions.

Slovakia remains of the view that the Rome Statute reflects a firm conviction of the international community that accountability must form an integral part of all discussions on sustainable peace and security of the humankind. This strong belief, together with the extraordinary diplomatic efforts of negotiators and the resolve of delegations to the Rome Conference to close the impunity gap, should serve as an inspiration for all of us, even today. It would allow us to work together to strengthen the ICC as an independent and impartial court of law that complements national jurisdictions, and to make the noble vision of universal justice a reality. This requires strong leadership on both sides – the States and the Court - delivering tangible results instead of appealing words.

I will now focus on 5 pillars of our vision for the International Criminal Court in the next decade.

1) Universality

It is fair to acknowledge that the ICC does not have universal jurisdiction as foreseen by the drafters of the Rome Statute. However, this does not mean that the idea of the ICC has somehow failed. The numbers of victims that have participated in the proceedings or have been awarded reparation or other assistance leave no doubt that the ICC has been a success. We also cannot overlook the deterrent effect of the Court. In order to promote the ratification and accession to

the Rome Statute, States Parties and the Court need to join forces and effectively counter any disinformation. And, wherever immediate ratification or accession is not possible, we must promote the adoption of a robust national legislation in line with the Rome Statute standards in the interim.

2) Cooperation

The effectiveness and success of the ICC's mandate depends largely on its cooperation with the States Parties. The Court needs the States Parties to equip it with adequate measures, including full and unconditioned cooperation. Respecting and implementing the Court's decisions of the Court regardless of the circumstances or political ramifications, should be crucial for the next decade. This builds legitimacy also when requesting cooperation from non-State Parties in the cases referred by the UN Security Council. Voluntary cooperation agreements with the Court should become a more wide and regular practice.

3) Full jurisdiction over all the Rome Statute crimes

Another fact is that the Rome Statute crimes are not treated equally. Crime of aggression has been subject to a second-class treatment from the very beginning. Slovakia has ratified the Kampala amendments and is ready to support the amendment to put all crimes under the Court's jurisdiction on equal footing. Witnessing the tragic consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the reality shows us that the vision of the ICC will never fully succeed unless the crime of aggression is adequately addressed.

4) Victims

Despite initially not being part of the draft Statute, the provisions on the victims' rights have proven to be essential. Such regulation has indeed been a novelty and a bit of an uncharted territory in international criminal justice. It thus took time to unravel its full potential. While it is important for the Court to manage expectations, it is also crucial to continue keeping victims at the heart of the Court's proceedings by giving the Trust Fund for Victims a more prominent role. Slovakia will follow closely the implementation of reparations as well as assistance mandates, and will continue in its financial support of the Trust Fund.

5) Unity in diversity for a greater ICC

The ICC must be perceived by each and every State Party and its people as their own Court. Indeed, more can be done in terms of full inclusiveness, be it geographical, gender or other. However, that is only one side of the coin. States Parties and the Court must all strive for a stronger Rome Statute system. This requires to reflect critically and strive collectively to improve the system. The recent Review Process has been a good example of how we can all pull together. Such exercise needs to become a constant and integral part of our efforts in the next decade. While calls for adequate and sustainable financing of the Court's growing workload are fully legitimate, they must go hand-in-hand with the highest possible quality and quantity of results.

Madam President, I shall conclude by reiterating Slovakia's unrelenting support for the International Criminal Court, including the values and principles enshrined in the Rome Statute. We stand firm in defending the Court's independence from any threats and recognize the valuable role of the civil society in our common objective of a universal justice for all.

I thank you.