

STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI, AT THE 14TH SESSION OF THE
ASSEMBLIES OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE ROME
STATUTE ON THE ICC

The Hague, November 18th, 2015

Mr. Chairman,

1. Let me begin by thanking the Almighty God for preserving our lives and allowing us to be here today. God deserves all the glory.
2. I wish also to join other delegations that spoke before me in congratulating you, for the manner in which you are conducting our deliberations.
3. Our delegation is heavily saddened by the last Saturday tragic attacks, which took almost 150 lives in France, in a few hours time. They have, alas, joined myriads of innocent people who have perished, stricken by the same scourge of terrorism in Nigeria, Mali, Cameroun, Niger, Egypt, Libya, Chad, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Burundi,.... to name but a few. Terrorism anywhere is terrorism everywhere. I therefore would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my Government's condolences to the People of France.
4. Sad enough, as we meet today, the People of Syria and Irak are running for their lives, because of the war atrocities committed in their beautiful countries. Since the war began in those territories, scores of people have been

internally displaced. Millions of others have crossed borders seeking peace in countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Iran,..., and others in places as far as Europe. Those countries have now joined Libya in what could rightly be called the category of “destroyed territories”. Who will account for crimes committed there? There seems to be a unanimous view that the events, which are taking place in that part of the world, have contributed immensely to the rise of terrorism. The whole world is now in danger. Whereas Africans have paid a heavy toll to terror, we now realize the urgent need of working in synergy to stop the hemorrhage.

5. It is unfortunate, that, as we are all witnessing the crimes which are being daily committed in those areas, no significant step has been made to allow justice to rein in. It is sad that we only hear of the ICC when Africa is concerned. It is unfair to realize that the concept of “international justice” now bears a racial connotation.
6. The UN Security Council and the ICC should bear in mind their transnational character. Because crimes are not committed in Africa, only. It seems that there is a sensor at the ICC and at the UN SC, which sends a signal at every hint of crimes in Africa, but dies when crimes are committed elsewhere.
7. It is against this background that this 14th session of the Assembly of States parties is taking place.
8. We therefore want to register our disappointment at the way this Court has been operating.
9. We have come to the Hague to claim our rights as full members of the Assembly of States parties to the Rome Statute. We have come to ring the clarinet bell for the ICC to change its ways of work, lest it becomes late because

Africa has been unjustly served for too long and this trend needs to be reversed.

Mr. Chairman,

10. Burundi has made significant progress since it ratified the Rome Statute on the ICC, in 2004. It joined this family with the understanding that complementarity of the ICC to the national jurisdictions will be respected.

11. Unfortunately, reality is divorced from the principle. Not only are African national jurisdictions not considered, but also the Office of the Prosecutor has had the tendency of acting as a political organ, singing the hymn of sanction and retribution against African countries, in tune with some particular actors on the international plane.

Mr. Chairman,

12. With a view to fulfilling the dream of delivering Justice, our country has proceeded with the revision of the Criminal Code. This process has killed two birds with one stone as the new code allows fast legal processes. Indeed, justice delayed is justice denied.

13. The investigations carried out in line with the attempted coup of May 13th, 2015, show our Government's resolve to fight impunity. I wish to take this opportunity to ask all our sister States parties, which have received coup plotters, to surrender them to Justice, in responding to the arrest warrants sent to that effect.

14. Again, I wish to take this opportunity to reassure our friends that not one single crime committed in Burundi since the insurrectionist movement started, will go unpunished. Also, rest assured that no genocide is in the making in Burundi, nor mass killings, simply because for one ethnicity is no longer the fault-line in our society, and, two, our people aspire to peace.
15. On the other hand, true justice has to serve Reconciliation. Hence the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, pursuant to the Constitution, rooted in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (2000). We need to know what happened since our independence. Why did our citizens lose their lives? We should actually be able to dig even deeper in the past, before independence.
16. In the same vein, a National Dialogue Body has been set up, which aims at opening conversations on issues of capital importance to our nation. All citizens from all walks of life will be associated.

Mr. Chairman,

17. Before I close I should like to put on the record our unwavering support to the AU call for the respect of immunities in favor of acting Heads of State and Government, as is accepted in the International Law. Some of the provisions of the Rome Statute have to suffer a bit for the sake of the stability of our nations. We believe that it is also one of the goals of Justice. It is in line with the foregoing that we recommend deferral for charges against African heads of State and Government.

18. In closing, let me once again reiterate my Government's readiness to play its role as a responsible State party, in a system governed by Justice. I thank you for your kind attention.