



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

Fourteenth Session
The Hague, 18-26 November 2015

Statement

by

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The Hague, 18 November 2015

(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Let me start by expressing our sincere appreciation for the leadership and dedication that you have shown during this year as the President of the Assembly of States Parties. I would also like to extend our gratitude to the Prosecutor and her office, to the President and the Registrar, as well as to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims and the Secretariat of the Assembly. The past year has been successful for the Court, thanks to your tireless efforts.

I would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Trust Fund for Victims, Advisory Committee on Nominations and the Committee for Budget and Finance and wish them best of success in their new roles.

Mr. President,

Finland continues to be strongly committed to the fight against impunity for the most serious international crimes and a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court.

The recent proliferation of serious crimes has emphasized the actuality of combatting impunity. The Court has become a centerpiece in this fight by reminding the international community that not a single atrocity crime shall be tolerated. The Court brings justice to the victims of the most horrendous crimes and serves as an effective deterrent to all those contemplating to commit such acts, regardless of their official capacity.

The responsibilities of the Court are global and universal. The recent increase in the caseload has emphasized the worldwide nature of the Court. The Office of the Prosecutor has during the past year conducted preliminary examination activities in ten situations. Investigations of the Prosecutor are conducted in nine situations. In total, the Court is currently seized of 23 cases.

Mr. President,

The aforesaid numbers are without precedence in the Court's history. They demonstrate an increased need for international justice in situations of diverse nature. They also serve as a testimony for the efficiency and professionalism of the Prosecutor and her office.

The numbers also serve as a reminder that the Court needs to be adequately funded. Without sufficient resources, the Court will not be able to deliver to its full potential. In fact, with the current capacity constraints combined with the increasing demand, the Court may even fall behind its current level and give a boost to those criticising the Court's performance. If the Court's resources are overstretched, the Court will not be able to achieve the level of effectiveness or efficiency that many States Parties are requesting. In this regard, we welcome the Basic Size document of the Office of the Prosecutor as an attempt to define the resources needed to be able to adequately respond to outside demands. We look forward to the continuation of the discussion on this concept, including its implications to the other organs of the Court.

Mr. President,

Cooperation of States with the Court is needed for the effective functioning of the Court. The Rome Statute system is built upon the principles of complementarity, cooperation, and shared responsibility to end impunity. Improved cooperation is needed in all areas of activity. We would like to express our particular concern that the number of outstanding arrest warrants remains high. We appeal to all States Parties to comply with their legal obligation under the Rome Statute to cooperate fully with the Court.

In addition to their legal obligations to cooperate, the States Parties have a range of voluntary measures through which they can assist the Court and each other. One excellent example is the roster of experts of the Justice Rapid Response, which has proved its value in the fight against impunity.

Other international actors also have a major role to play in making the Court more efficient. I am referring particularly to the UN Security Council. If a non-State Party is not willing to investigate and prosecute atrocity crimes committed in its territory or refer such crimes to the Court, the Security Council must step in by referring the situation to the Court and providing the Court with the necessary financial resources. One of the most acute examples is Syria.

Mr. President,

The universality of the Rome Statute is a chief goal for us all. In this regard, Finland welcomes the recent steps taken towards universality, including the accession of Palestine to the Rome Statute as well as the declaration made by Ukraine with respect to the Court's jurisdiction. We hope the Ukrainian declaration will soon be followed by the ratification of the Rome Statute.

We also urge all delegations in this room to promote universality in their bilateral and multilateral contacts with non-States Parties. Universality is not only about ratifying the Rome Statute and its amendments, but also about enacting relevant implementing legislation at the national level.

At this point, I am glad to inform that Finland is in the very last stages of ratifying the Kampala amendments to the Rome Statute. It is our goal that the ratification process, including implementing legislation, is completed by the end of the year.

Mr. President,

The rights of victims of the most heinous crimes are a priority for Finland. The Rome Statute encompasses a range of preventative, retributive, and reparative measures to address the rights of victims and thus demonstrates the role of victims as beneficiaries of international law. We appreciate the fact that the Court not only holds the perpetrators of the most serious crimes to accountable, but helps the victims and their families to rebuild their lives.

I would like to reiterate Finland's strong support for the ICC Trust Fund for Victims. The Trust Fund has provided assistance to a very large number of victims in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. What makes the Trust Fund an important agent of international justice is that it can assist the victims already during lengthy legal proceedings through various measures. Finland is pleased to have been able to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund on an annual basis, including through a multi-year assistance scheme, and strives to continue doing so also in the future.

Reparations are an essential element of the rights of victims. This year has marked a milestone for the Trust Fund as well as the entire Court in this regard. The Court commissioned the Trust Fund with the task of preparing the first ever draft implementation plan for reparations for victims and the Trust Fund has worked tirelessly to fulfill this task. It is imperative to prepare and implement reparations with utmost care. This is a key issue from the perspective of how fair the international justice system is perceived in the affected countries.

At this point I would like to reiterate our great appreciation to the secretariat and the Executive Board of the Trust Fund. We would like to express our particular thanks to the outgoing members of the Board for their valuable efforts to make the world a more just place.

Mr. President,

The Court will start its fourteenth year with high expectations. The Court has recently been handed-over its permanent premises to which it will move in December. We are confident that the new premises will give the Court an additional lift in fulfilling its mandate in the fight against impunity. We warmly congratulate the Court and others involved for the completion of the building project.

Mr. President, Members of the Assembly,

We the States Parties of the Assembly, have a number of important tasks ahead of us in the coming days. It is important that we address also difficult issues when fulfilling our responsibilities as members of the Assembly. In doing so we must, however, ensure that our discussions do not interfere with the responsibilities of the Court and the conduct of its judicial proceedings. Safeguarding the independence and integrity of the Court is of utmost importance.

Mr. President, I thank you.