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To the Rome Statute of
The International Criminal Court**

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Statement

By

H. E. Mr. Peter Stenlund
Secretary of State
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

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(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Let me start by expressing our sincere appreciation to the Presidency of the Assembly as well as the bureau members for their dedication to the work of the Assembly.

We fully align ourselves to the statement of the European Union to be delivered later today.

Mr. President,

During the past year, the ICC has again reached significant milestones.

Among these I would like to highlight the sentencing of Jean Pierre Bemba Gombo to imprisonment for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Central African Republic. This was the first ever judgement of the Court for sexual violence and command responsibility and is an important signal for the victims of such atrocious crimes. There must be zero tolerance for sexual violence and no impunity for sexual violence in conflicts, yet we know that there remains much work to be done to achieve this.

We also welcome the Office of the Prosecutor's policies to address crimes against those who are most vulnerable, in important areas such as sexual and gender-based crimes. We are also pleased to have contributed to the launching event this evening of the new policy of the OTP on prosecuting crimes against children, which is also an important new development.

Mr. President,

The Court is currently seized of 23 cases and 10 situations. Despite the growing activities of the Court, it is important to underline that the ICC is and that it should be a court of last instance – the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute for the Rome Statute crimes belongs to the States themselves. When a State lacks capacity to take action at the national level, it should have access to support and assistance. With this in mind, Finland strongly supports the Justice Rapid Response, which is one example of a support mechanism providing States and organizations with rapidly deployable criminal justice professionals trained for international investigations. In October, we hosted in Finland a JRR certification training course on International Criminal Investigations.

Mr. President,

In order to provide justice for the victims, we must strive for the global acceptance of the Rome Statute. We welcome El Salvador as a new State Party to the Statute.

With the goal of universality in mind, we regret the decisions of South-Africa, Burundi and Gambia to withdraw from the Rome Statute. We stand ready to continue our constructive

dialogue with those States Parties, who have concerns. However, the framework of the Rome Statute and its fundamental principles must be respected.

Finland ratified the Kampala amendments in late 2015, and together with national implementing legislation, they will enter into force for Finland at the end of the year. We welcome the fulfillment of the required threshold of 30 ratifications and we look forward to adopting the decision on the activation of the ICC's jurisdiction on the crime of aggression during the next session of the ASP in 2017.

Mr. President,

We welcome the Court's ambition to further enhance its effectiveness. The cooperation of States with the ICC is also of crucial importance for its efficient functioning. It is a cause for great concern that the number of outstanding arrest warrants remains high. States Parties have a legal obligation under the Rome Statute to cooperate fully with the Court. Furthermore, we strongly urge all States to cooperate fully and effectively with the Court, in line with any applicable United Nations Security Council resolutions.

In order for the Court to function efficiently, it needs to be properly funded with sufficient resources to carry out the mandate it has been entrusted with. At this occasion I would also like to note the move into the new permanent premises, which marks a new era for the Court.

Mr. President,

The reparative function of the Court is of great significance in international criminal law. Finland is a longstanding supporter of the Trust Fund for Victims. The Fund has reached a large number of victims in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the intention of the Trust Fund to expand its assistance mandate to other situation countries as well. Finland will continue its financial support to the Trust Fund and we call other States also to consider contributing to the Fund.

Mr. President,

Let me finish by reiterating the strong support of Finland to the Court. Next year will mark the fifteenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute. During these first fifteen years of its existence, the ICC has truly become a cornerstone in the fight against impunity for the most serious international crimes. We are grateful of the contribution of the Office of the Prosecutor, the Registry and the Chambers in making the Court a success and thereby strengthening the rule of law both at the international and at the national level.

Thank you.

