

## November 2016 ICC ASP15 General Debate: Statement - Ireland

Mr President

Ireland associates itself with the statement made by Slovakia on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. At the outset, I take this opportunity to thank the President of the Assembly, H.E. Mr Sidiki Kaba, and all the members of the Bureau for their work in preparing for this fifteenth session of the Assembly and to assure you of our support. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant contributions made by facilitators and members of The Hague and New York Working Groups throughout the year.

The International Criminal Court is a key element of the international community's efforts to provide for a system of international justice to deal with the most serious crimes of concern. It is not the only element, but it is key. It is there to work, together with its States Parties and the UN, as appropriate, to ensure accountability for those who commit such crimes. It is there to work with States who seek to bring domestic prosecutions against the perpetrators of such crimes. It is there to militate against the commission of such crimes. The Court's sole purpose, therefore, is to provide justice for the victims of these terrible crimes and to seek to prevent individuals becoming victims in the future.

Ireland has always been, and continues to be, a staunch supporter of the Court. The Court has achieved much since its establishment. The Court's Annual Report of its activities for the period 2015/2016, which was presented to the UN General Assembly by its President, Judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi, serves to demonstrate the breadth of its work. During the reporting period, the Court was seized of 23 cases and 10 country situations. The Office of the Prosecutor conducted preliminary examination activities in 11 situations in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. The reach of the Court is global, although not yet universal. In addition, during this period, the Court issued a number of key judgments. For example, the Court's conviction of Mr Ahmad al Mahdi for war crimes related to the destruction of cultural property was the first of its kind for the Court.

The achievements of the Court throughout last year could only have been obtained with the cooperation of States. The success of the Court depends ultimately on the cooperation of States. Ireland urges all States to cooperate fully and effectively with requests for assistance from the Court. It continues to be very concerning that the number of outstanding arrest warrants remains high and it is incumbent upon States to cooperate in this regard.

In addition, the Court also urgently needs the help of States in relation to the conclusion of voluntary agreements or other arrangements to facilitate practical assistance to the Court. These are needed in order to allow it to function effectively. It needs States to assist it with protective measures for victims and witnesses. It needs assistance in relation to the implementation of judicial orders in the area of interim release, final release and sentence enforcement. I am very pleased to announce that this year Ireland concluded such an agreement in relation to witness re-location. We strongly urge other States to consider supporting the Court in this regard.

Mr President

As I have already highlighted, the sole objective of the Court is to address the needs of victims. An important element of the Rome Statute with regard to delivering justice to victims was recognised with the establishment of a Trust Fund for Victims. Ireland has been a consistent annual contributor to the Trust Fund. The Fund continues to need support and we encourage all States, but in particular States Parties, who have not yet contributed, to consider doing so in future.

As the work of the Court has progressed, it is now very clear that, unquestionably, the Court faces many difficult challenges. However, these challenges are also for us as States Parties to the Rome Statute. The Rome Statute system provides for a permanent Court, and for a unique framework for international criminal justice, which is inevitably evolving. We believe that we should work together to overcome any difficulties encountered. We believe that we should do this for the sake of the victims of the crimes dealt with by the Rome Statute.

For this reason, Ireland regrets the decisions of South Africa, Burundi and the Gambia to withdraw from the Rome Statute. We hope these countries will reconsider those decisions. We remain committed to working with all States in the international community in the furtherance of the cause of international justice.

Mr President

I will conclude by reiterating that Ireland regards the Court as an essential element of the international criminal justice system. We will continue to work to support the Court and to develop the Rome Statute system in order to address impunity, provide accountability and prevent the commission of terrible crimes. Thank you.