

**Statement by**  
**H. E. Ambassador Ilze Rūse**  
**Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Latvia to the**  
**Kingdom of the Netherlands**  
**at the**  
**General debate of the**  
**Fifteenth Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute**  
**of the International Criminal Court**  
**The Hague, November 17, 2016**

**Mr President,**

Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, let me state, that Latvia fully aligns with the statement delivered yesterday on behalf of the European Union its Member States and countries, that have associated themselves with that statement.

**Mr President,**

I would like to take this opportunity to commend you, Excellency, on your outstanding work as the President of this Assembly. Latvia is resolved to cooperate closely with you and all States Parties to the Rome Statute and the international community to attain our mutual goal in winning the battle against impunity and preventing the horrors of atrocious crimes. Latvia would also like to thank the outgoing Vice-President of the Assembly of States Parties, distinguished Ambassador Alvaro Moerzinger for his excellent work and dedication and to welcome his successor, Ambassador Mr Sergio Ugalde of Costa Rica assuming the post.

I would also like to congratulate El Salvador on becoming 124<sup>th</sup> State Party to the Rome Statute.

Moreover, we welcome new ratifications of the Kampala Amendments. It allows to take activation decision on the Court`s jurisdiction over the crimes of aggression in 2017. This practice clearly bears a witness of States` further willingness to embrace a path towards universality of the Rome Statute and not the contrary.

**Mr President,**

It is my great pleasure to address you today and to reaffirm Latvia`s support for the International Criminal Court and the principles for which it stands for.

It should be remembered that justice and peace are mutually reinforcing concepts and none of them would be whole without the other.

As we know the Court is the last resort to seek remedy for the victims when states are not capable or are unwilling to deliver justice themselves. Indeed, complementarity is a fundamental principle of the Rome Statute and the work of the Court has proven that victims may count on its facility when the states have failed to deliver.

**Mr President,**

The strength of the Court, amongst other its virtues, lies in the legal certainty and quality of the justice it upholds and pursues through its effective functioning. The ICC needs the trust and support of the international community and most particularly the support of its current members. This is why Latvia deeply regrets the intention of some States Parties to withdraw from the Rome Statute. We sincerely invite those states to reconsider their position.

Latvia strongly believes that any concerns expressed by the States Parties could be addressed through dialogue and constructive engagement while honoring and preserving core principles of the Rome Statute. We also underline the importance of upholding the integrity and independence of the Court.

**Mr President, distinguished delegates,**

We are living in times where in many places of the world peace is yet to be achieved and justice for victims is still a distant aspiration. The values we cherish require steadfast protection and therefore no alleged perpetrators of atrocity crimes should find refuge anywhere in the world. The Court is currently conducting preliminary examinations and investigations in most regions of the world, thus demonstrating that there is no safe haven for those who commit the most serious crimes.

There is still more potential for the Court. Latvia was one of the first to ratify the Kampala amendments and we do believe that crimes of aggression must be properly addressed with a view to end the impunity and to listen to the call of the victims.

**Mr President,**

Lastly, the international community has a shared responsibility to protect those who suffer from the unimaginable atrocities and injustice. The International Criminal Court has set a promising path for international criminal justice and it must continue to deliver in the name of peace and for the benefit of the victims. Hopes and aspirations of the victims can be shattered when precluding them from the ultimate instances to justice. We have gone a long way to make the world a better place and we should not give up on our joint commitments. We have to find a language that unites us and brings us forward.

I thank You, Mr. President.