

**Statement by William R. Pace
Convenor, Coalition for the International Criminal Court
for the 15th session of the Assembly of States Parties**

17 November 2016
The Hague, The Netherlands

Mr. Vice President,
Distinguished Delegates,

The International Criminal Court and engagement in the Rome Statute system are essential means of promoting respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, thus contributing to sustainable peace in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations through freedom, security, justice, and the rule of law, as well as through the prevention of armed conflict, the preservation of peace, and the advancement of post-conflict peace-building and reconciliation.

Justice and peace are complementary and mutually reinforcing, and the Rome Statute system provides a model framework for that inclusive peace process, which must incorporate – in addition to the protection of future victims through the stabilization of conflict situations – justice and accountability for existing victims of atrocities through fair and effective investigations and proceedings.

Each government has a responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, recognizing that the conscience of humanity continues to be deeply shocked by unimaginable atrocities in various parts of the world. There is an urgent need to both end and deter these most serious crimes of concern to the international community, and to eradicate impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes.

The Court plays a central role in peace-building processes as the only permanent international criminal court within an evolving system of international criminal justice, not least through the Court's contribution to guaranteeing lasting respect for, and the enforcement of, international justice.

These statements comprise the beginning of the Assembly's main overall policy document, and are as fundamental to NGOs as to States Parties.¹

Distinguished delegates, between four and five hundred representatives of Coalition member organizations from throughout the world are participating in this year's Assembly of States Parties

The decisions of three governments to withdraw are a matter of tremendous concern to the Coalition. This week, hundreds of African civil society organizations and networks have written

¹ "Strengthening the International Criminal Court and the Assembly of State Parties" – [Resolution ICC-ASP/14/Res.4](#)

to African Heads of State, and foreign and justice ministers, strongly supporting the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court.

The withdrawal developments in the ICC Assembly reflects forces of withdrawal and political disunion spreading across the international legal order – including, for example, withdrawals from Inter-American institutions and in the European Union.

The Assembly and the ICC were born with the most powerful government in the world waging a four year campaign to kill the Court. The architects of that policy are returning to power in January.

Thus, protecting and defending the Rome Statute and the ICC, and all humanitarian and human rights laws and institutions, has become exponentially more important in just the last few weeks.

This historic system of international criminal law was an achievement of the world's middle- and small-sized democracies. Now you must stand up again, and the global Coalition of civil society organizations will stand and fight with you.

One immediate challenge at this ASP will be with the 2017 ICC budget. We appeal to the G7+2 to not use the budget to make inappropriate political pressure on the OTP and the Court. NGOs are not so naïve to recognize the systematic strangulation occurring to human rights and international law institutions world-wide is due to austerity – it is political.

Distinguished delegates, our members sincerely hope the government of South Africa will maintain their tremendous post-apartheid constitution and their implementation act – one of the most advanced laws in the world. These achievements, and the Rome Statute, are part of the legacy of Nelson Mandela. It is tragic to recall, so few years later, the current fate of tremendous hopes we held for inspired world leadership, inspired by President Mandela.

As we approach next year's elections of six new judges, new bureau, President and officers at the ASP, and soon afterwards a new President and leadership of the ICC, we plead with the governments to improve your election practices.

Delegates and colleagues, as we approach the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute in 2018, we dedicate our global network to support the ASP and ICC.

The Coalition's key recommendations for the 15th session of the Assembly of States Parties can be found [here](#).