



**15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly of States Parties, The Hague, 17 November 2016**

**Opening Remarks**

**Guissou Jahangiri, FIDH Vice President, Director of Open Asia – Armanshar**

Good afternoon your excellencies,

It is my great pleasure to address the 15th Assembly of States Parties in the name of Open Asia - Armanshar, and the International Federation for Human Rights - FIDH - and its 184 member organisations.

As a human rights defender working in Afghanistan, I have a vital message for you. After years of armed conflict, and a long preliminary examination by the ICC, we are ready for accountability. There are times when a court of last resort is needed, and this is one of them.

We are heartened by the news that a full-fledged investigation by the ICC may be on the horizon.

We must reiterate, once again, that accountability is not an obstacle to the process of building peace, but rather a necessary ingredient for it.

Your excellencies,

Now is not the time to back away from your commitments to justice. To the contrary, it is the time to redouble efforts to support the ICC in its pursuit of justice for victims of international crimes. FIDH entreats you to make your support visible. Make your support visible for the ICC as well as for the human rights defenders that tirelessly work for justice both here in The Hague and in our home countries. We often face threats to our lives and our livelihoods precisely for supporting this

institution, as recent threats against our Palestinian colleagues from Al Haq and Al Mezan demonstrate.

We never stop fighting for justice. We ask you to refuse to stop fighting as well. Do not make membership of the Rome Statute dependent on your views about who has been prosecuted to date - by doing so you risk trading away the interests of victims in situations waiting to be investigated.

And to those States who have so valiantly stood before us, avowing your continued support for the work of the ICC: now is the time to make that support *real*. The ICC needs its budget approved. By cutting corners, you are also depriving opportunities for justice. Let us make no mistake. At the end of the day, tying the Court's hands by denying it funds causes it damage.

We also cannot stress enough the importance of making a long-term commitment to funding the Trust Fund for Victims. Making sure survivors have access to redress and reparation is one of the fundamental reasons for the existence of this Court.

We are all here to reinforce a strong and equitable Rome Statute system. Let us work together to build rather than destroy.

Thank you.