



Embassy of Portugal

The Hague

**FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY
OF STATES PARTIES TO
ROME STATUTE**

GENERAL DEBATE

Statement by

Ms. Susana Vaz Patto

Head of the Department of International Law

Department of Legal Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Portugal

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Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great honour for me to address today the Fifteenth Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute. Portugal shares, obviously, the views expressed by the Presidency of the European Union. Allow me to underline some particular aspects of relevance to my country.

Mr. President,

This past year the Court has had an unprecedented level of activity, which is a testimony that the ICC is now a fully established institution. In view of such level of activity, it remains important that the Court endeavours to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. We praise, therefore, the continuation of the work and discussions in this matter and we welcome the adoption of the Chambers Practice Manual, the Policy Paper on Case Selection and Prioritisation and the Draft Policy on Children. We trust that the implementation of the measures included in these documents will enhance the accomplishments of the Court.

Mr. President,

With the increasing workload of the Court, all cooperation efforts are fundamental for the ICC to perform the role it was given by the Rome Statute, not only to ensure accountability of the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole but also -and perhaps above all- to ensure that the rights of the victims prevail.

At the same time, the complementary nature of the ICC must not be forgotten: the ICC was not created to replace States and bringing to justice those responsible for the most serious crimes is, first and foremost, a responsibility of States. The Court should only act where national authorities fail or are not in a position to take the steps necessary to ensure accountability for such crimes.

Mr. President,

Portugal continues to strongly support the International Criminal Court as a fully independent judicial institution and will continue to contribute to preserve the integrity and promote the universality of the Statute.

Portugal shares therefore the concerns expressed by many other delegations regarding to the latest developments related to the Court. The withdrawal from the Rome Statute is a sovereign decision of each State that we must respect. However, for the last fifteen years, State Parties have remained committed to promoting the universality of the Rome Statute and we cannot help but regret any withdrawal decision and we hope that the concerned States may reconsider.

Mr. President,

Portugal continues and will continue to listen attentively to the concerns that have been raised regarding the ICC and remains committed to having a comprehensive and constructive dialogue within the framework of the Assembly of State Parties to address such concerns. A frank dialogue is important and Portugal believes that the challenges that the Court faces can be overcome through this dialogue.

In particular, we recognise that improvements can be made with regard to the mechanism of consultations foreseen in Article 97 of the Statute and we remain ready to discuss this and other issues that may be raised.

Mr. President,

Humanity has witnessed too much large scale violence, suffering and destruction. The world has to continue to say "never again" to horrific crimes and to advance the fight against impunity through the ICC and national jurisdictions.

Let us continue to build on what we have historically started in Rome in 1998.

To this end, it is my honour to inform this Assembly that both the Kampala Amendments, including on the Crime of Aggression and the Amendment to Article 124 of the Rome Statute have been submitted by our Government to the Parliament for approval and hopefully they will be very soon ratified.

I thank you, Mr. President.