



SLOVENIA

STATEMENT

BY

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International Criminal Court**

General debate

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Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to address this assembly on behalf of Slovenia. I would like to express Slovenia's appreciation for your valuable leadership, Mr President, and reiterate our full support for your endeavours and role. We would also like to warmly thank the organs of the Court and its staff for their hard work.

Today's debate is an important opportunity to reiterate and strengthen support for the Court and engage in a dialogue on the critical need for a continuous and strong commitment to global efforts to combat impunity. It is an occasion to appreciate the historic achievement of states from all regions with the creation of the world's only permanent international criminal court. It is also an occasion to praise the Court's achievements, and to discuss constructively how to further improve its functioning.

Mr President,

Slovenia is pleased to observe that many things were accomplished in the past year. We welcome the accession of El Salvador to the Rome Statute and new ratifications of the Rome Statute amendments and APIC, as well as the move of the Court to the new permanent premises. The Court also saw an unprecedented increase in its workload, delivered important statements on international criminal law and continued the concrete steps to improve the Court's efficiency and effectiveness. We note the increasing number of communications received by the ICC, which attest to the increased reliance on the ICC as the Court of last resort to offer a voice to victims of the most heinous crimes.

It is important to appreciate the progress made. At the same time, we should not shy away from current challenges. The creation of the ICC was a ground-breaking achievement in international law. Nevertheless, the Court was not expected to be free of challenges. We should continue our efforts and dedication, as shown in Rome, to strengthen the Court and broaden its membership. The Court enjoys strong and wide support. It requires our constructive engagement and inclusive dialogue. We need to focus on improving the functioning of the Court. On the other hand, attention must be given to improving its image in all regions of the world.

It is in this context that Slovenia regrets the recent decisions of some states parties to withdraw from the Rome Statute. We acknowledge that a decision to withdraw from a treaty is a sovereign act. We are not here to judge the actions of other states'. Yet, we cannot but express concern about the message that these actions send to victims of atrocity crimes and its effect on the global fight against impunity. It is our firm conviction that the world needs more of the ICC, not less.

Slovenia hopes that the decisions to withdraw will be reconsidered and that any concerns that states might have with respect to the ICC will be addressed within this forum through constructive dialogue and cooperation in equal partnership.

Slovenia expresses its readiness to genuinely engage with all states in seeking mutually acceptable solutions to the outstanding issues, while safe-guarding the Court's mandate and the fundamental principles of the Rome Statute.

Mr President,

The universality of the Rome Statute and the Kampala amendments, including the activation of the crime of aggression amendments in 2017, remain important goals for my government. It is only with universal membership of the ICC that the Court will be able to truly fulfil its mandate. Slovenia calls upon all states to join the ICC. Our commitment to this goal is also seen through the participation of our foreign minister Karl Erjavec in the Informal Ministerial Network for the ICC.

It is truly worrying that many victims of dreadful crimes remain beyond the reach of the Court, the consequences of which we continue to witness in several situations, including Syria and Iraq. Slovenia recalls its conviction that the situation in Syria should be referred to the ICC.

The Court also requires effective cooperation, particularly on the part of states as well as international and regional organisations. While cooperation with the Court is generally successful, Slovenia is concerned that 13 arrest warrants remain outstanding. It is imperative that states parties comply with the Rome Statute obligations. We therefore welcome the focus of this assembly session on the way forward with respect to cooperation. As we have heard repeatedly from the Court, the ICC also requires states' voluntary assistance. I am pleased to inform that this year Slovenia has started discussions with the Court on the conclusion of a voluntary agreement, which we hope will soon be concluded.

Slovenia's commitment to combating impunity is also shown in our efforts to improve the implementation of the principle of complementarity. Together with Argentina, Belgium and the Netherlands, Slovenia continues to be actively engaged in these efforts, in particular through the initiative to adopt a new international instrument on mutual legal assistance and extradition between states for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. By this I mean the so-called MLA initiative. The primary responsibility for prosecuting atrocity crimes rests with states. So it is essential to focus on improving domestic legal and judicial systems, as well as inter-state cooperation. I would like to invite all states to join the MLA initiative.

In conclusion, I pledge my government's continued strong support for the Court as it continues its important work for the furtherance of peace and justice.

Thank you.