



Speech

Baroness Anelay speech at International Criminal Court Assembly of State Parties

From: Foreign & Commonwealth Office (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office>) and The Rt Hon **Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/anelay-of-st-johns>)

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Speech by FCO Minister Baroness Anelay at the International Criminal Court Assembly of State Parties in the Hague



Mr Vice-President, your Excellencies.

The United Kingdom is, and will continue to be, a passionate advocate for the rules-based international system. As such, I want to express the United Kingdom's continued support for, and commitment to, the

International Criminal Court.

It is right that national courts and other tribunals hold perpetrators to account and provide redress to victims when these institutions are willing and able to do so. However, when they cannot, the ICC must stand ready to act as the court of last resort.

The ICC upholds the rule of law, deters atrocities, and gives hope to the oppressed. Crucially, it plays an important role in ending impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern. It reminds individuals of their responsibilities, no matter who they are. Recent events – in Syria and elsewhere – have demonstrated that the need to end impunity has never been greater.

We should be proud of what the Court has achieved since it was established 14 years ago. We should celebrate its successes. This year, we witnessed the first convictions for sexual violence and rape as a war crime, and a crime against humanity. We also saw the first guilty plea and conviction for intentionally attacking historic and religious monuments.

These achievements are a triumph for international action as much as they are a victory for the victims. They show that the ICC can deliver justice. We want to advance the universality of the Rome Statute, not erode it. That is why we are deeply concerned at the news that some States Parties have announced their intention to withdraw from the Court. We urge States Parties not to walk away, but instead to resolve any issues they may have with the ICC. The United Kingdom is committed to discussing any such issues during this Assembly and beyond. Let all of us who value this institution make the case for the Court, and make the case for building towards its universality.

As we do so, we must be mindful of the Court's independence and avoid burdening it with highly political decisions. The United Kingdom is calling for further discussion and greater clarity regarding activation of the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. This is not to undo or re-open the amendments agreed in Kampala, but instead to develop a common understanding of how the jurisdiction will be exercised. We

therefore welcome the proposal for a Working Group so that we as States take the responsibility for ensuring clarity rather than leaving such hugely difficult and political issues to the Court to resolve in future individual cases.

Finally, the United Kingdom believes that the Court must have the resources necessary to do its work, and that these resources must be used as efficiently as possible. That is why we are committed to working with others to ensure the budget is as streamlined as possible.

In conclusion: the United Kingdom has a long history of supporting international efforts to secure justice. We will continue to support the Court and work with it, and with States Parties, to resolve any issues which may arise.

Mr Vice-President: victims of atrocity crimes deserve access to justice. Perpetrators of the most serious crimes must be punished. There can be no impunity. The ICC is making progress. That is why the Court deserves our continued support.

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