



Check Against Delivery

Statement of the Deputy Minister of Justice of Georgia

H.E. Mr. GOCHA LORDKIPANIDZE

**General Debate of the 16th Assembly of States Parties to the Rome
Statute of the International Criminal Court**

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Mr Vice-President, Madame President of the Court, Madame Prosecutor, Mr Registrar,
Excellences

- J It is a great feeling to be back and address the distinguished delegates
- J In the audience I recognize those whom I have known since early days of negotiations of the Rome Statute and the working of the Preparatory Commission for the ICC
- J And this is not merely symbolic
- J Over two decades time has changed many things but one –
- J the resolve and dedication with which we all together at that time brought the International Criminal Court into existence
- J Now the same resolve needs to translate into a renewed commitment to the Court...
- J ...for it to remain functional both in terms of legal infrastructure and adequate budgetary resources
- J Therefore, we strongly support the initiatives towards this end, including reaching agreement on the activation of the jurisdiction over the crime of aggression and meeting the budget requested by the ICC.

Mr President

- J In this respect, we note both significant accomplishments and challenges that shape the way the ICC is seen to be living up to the increased demands of international justice
- J Remarkably, last year has witnessed the first case of destruction of cultural property tried before the Court
- J Equally, the strong response of the Court to the offences against the administration of justice in *Bemba* did not go unnoticed
- J And yet, an effective and comprehensive cooperation and assistance by States in all aspects of the ICC mandate based on complementarity remains an indispensable element for the Court to carry out its activities
- J In this respect the ICC investigation into the situation in my own country - Georgia may serve as a litmus test for the Court in coping with the challenges to the principles that underlie the Rome Statute

- J More so, it is the first time the Court entered Europe's legal geography and launched an investigation into the complex international conflict between Russia and Georgia.
- J The demand in international justice is long overdue in Georgia –
- J The country has been a victim of international crimes since 1990ies and then again in August 2008, where thousands of civilians were targeted in a repeated wave of ethnic cleansing and other grave acts
- J In these circumstances, the prompt response of the ICC prosecutor's office by opening an examination into the situation on 14 August 2008 delivered a strong message that such crimes could not any more go unpunished and unabated.
- J On our part, Georgia has carried out unprecedented investigation with crime scene inspections conducted in over 30 inhabited areas, dozen forensic expert opinions issued and statements taken from around 7000 witnesses
- J Where evidence was inaccessible due to the Russian occupation of the Georgian territories, we examined the crime scenes through the satellite imagery
- J However, despite continued efforts our ability to carry out additional necessary investigative measures in those territories at this stage is hampered by the continued occupation
- J But now, when the national efforts are complemented by the ICC we should like to have every confidence that the impartial investigation by the ICC Prosecutor's Office will result in enforcing international justice.
- J As emphasized by Madame Prosecutor the investigation will lead to establishing the truth and bringing justice to the victims.
- J To achieve this goal, we offer to the Court engagement on what we call 5 E's:
- ✓ First, **Engagement with the ICC prosecutor's office** based on the principle of complementarity and efficient labor distribution in the investigation. The existing national legislation of the Rome Statute, including a separate Law on Cooperation with the ICC and Georgia being a party to the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Court ("APIC") greatly facilitate cooperation with the Court under Article 86 of the Rome Statute.
 - ✓ Second, **Engagement with the ICC Registry** to ensure successful court-wide cooperation and public outreach. Our ongoing public outreach campaign (we had

the side event just 2 days ago in this building) having victims of the 2008 war, NGO's and universities as primary target groups, is focused on explaining the mandate of the ICC investigation and national efforts to reinforce the trust in the Court. The national outreach is conducted in coordination with the ICC campaign in what we enjoy an excellent cooperation with the Registrar and his Office.

- ✓ Third, **Engagement with the victims and Trust Fund** for victims. As noted before we had series of meetings with them while we continue to facilitate and support the Trust Fund activities in Georgia
- ✓ Fourth, **Engagement with the civil society and international NGO's**, including Coalition for the ICC to mobilize support and understanding for the ongoing procedures and our national efforts
- ✓ Fifth, **Engagement with our partners and parties to the Rome Statute** to support the Court and related institutions by increasing and strengthening its institutional and budgetary means to effectively perform the mandate. This seems necessary to shoulder the ICC burden of the ongoing 11 investigations, including in Georgia and a number of preliminary examinations. I am particularly pleased to announce that the Government of Georgia intends to earmark 10 000 Euros for these purposes to the Trust Fund for victims by the end of this year.

) Let me conclude by expressing to you, Mr President, and to all participants of this Assembly my best wishes in continuance of our important task – to have engaging and result-oriented discussions that define the role of the International Criminal Court in enforcing international justice and peace for the years to come.