

**NIGERIAN STATEMENT TO THE GENERAL DEBATE OF
THE 8TH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES
PARTIES TO THE ROME STATUTE ON THE ICC
THE HAGUE – NETHERLANDS
12 – 26 NOVEMBER 2009**

DELIVERED BY:

**AMB. DR. (MRS.) N. N. AKANBI
NIGERIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE ROYAL KINGDOM
OF THE NETHERLANDS**

Mr. President,

The Nigerian delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute on the ICC and pledges its support and cooperation for your efforts to ensure a successful Session.

We would also like to express appreciation to the President of the Court, the Prosecutor and the Registrar for their reports to the Assembly on their mandates, as well as to the Secretariat for their work in preparation of the Session

At the onset, Nigeria would like to congratulate the two newly elected Judges and their dear countries for their success in the election. To Judge Silva Fernandez de Gurmandi and to Judge Kuiko Ozaki, we say welcome to the Committee of the wise. We wish you great success as you take up your exalted positions.

The Nigerian delegation welcomes the relentless efforts of the International Criminal Court in carrying out its mandate as an independent judicial institution, charged with investigations into, and trials of individuals for the most serious crimes of international concern, namely genocide, crime against humanity and war crimes. As stated by the United Nations Secretary-General in his recent letter inviting States to the forthcoming Review Conference of the Rome Statute "The establishment of the ICC capped the efforts of the international community to enforce the applicability of international humanitarian law and advance the cause of justice and the rule of law on a universal scale". This achievement should be assiduously advanced and guarded by all nations.

Nigeria is committed to the ICC, the establishment of which we recognize as one of the great advances of international law. That is why Nigeria has continued to meet all its obligations, and is in the

forefront of the implementation of the Rome Statute of the ICC. The President of Nigeria has since signed and sealed the Instrument of Ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC, precisely on 23 July, 2001.

The Court's function of ensuring accountability for grave crimes is vital for the maintenance of lasting international peace and security. To strengthen the ability of the Court to effectively discharge this most important responsibility, the Court relies on the cooperation of States, International Organizations and Civil Society in accordance with the Rome Statute and international agreements concluded by the Court. This cooperation is critical in enhancing the effectiveness of ICC as a tool to end impunity and contribute to the prevention of future crimes. In this connection, Nigeria is presently assisting the Court in the prosecution of those involved in the case concerning the Haskanita killing of peace-keepers in Darfur by giving the Court access to witnesses.

Mr. President,

We have taken note of efforts by the ICC to improve geographical representation, gender balance and the representation of the different legal systems of the world in its recruitment activities in accordance with the decision in document number ICC-ASP/1/Res.10. We commend these efforts, and would like to underscore the need for the ICC to achieve the target of wide geographical representation and gender balance especially with regard to the African region which in spite of the fact that it provides most, if not all of the situations before the Court, is still under represented. We believe that the necessary balance can be attained without compromising the quality of staff selected.

We are pleased to note that the Court has already entered into relocation/protection of witnesses and enforcement of sentences agreements with certain States. In order to encourage more States to enter into such agreements with the Court, we believe that the Court needs to become more proactive by exploring ways to facilitate participation of more developing States in this exercise. In that connection we take note of the action reported by the Registrar on a Trust Fund to assist States. We would like to thank contributors to the Fund as well as those who are working directly with the victims. It is however important for the Court to work with possible receiving countries on a witness relocation/protection policy and build necessary capacity within those countries.

Mr. President,

Nigeria would like to commend both The Hague and the New York working groups of the Bureau and the various facilitators for their hard work, which has no doubt further strengthened the Court, and we urge them not to relent. As the ICC enters its operational stage, there is a continuing need for consolidation in the areas of cooperation, universality of the Statute, complementarity, equitable geographical representation and gender balance, among other areas.

We take note with satisfaction of the report of the Registrar on progress made on the establishment of an ICC liaison office in Addis Ababa. My delegation equally welcomes the Registrar's report on dialogue with the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs concerning the matter of residual mechanism and archives related to the Ad Hoc Tribunals on Rwanda, an on the former Yugoslavia as well as on the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Indeed, such an engagement will strengthen international criminal justice and constitute a befitting legacy for the ICC.

Mr. President,

We are happy to see the increasing number of States Parties to the Rome Statute. We would like to seize this opportunity to welcome the two new signatories, namely, the Czech Republic and the Republic of Chile. With more than two-thirds (110 countries) of the United Nations membership having signed or ratified the treaty, we can say that we are making good progress towards the Court's universality.

As we look forward to the Review Conference of the Rome Statute on the ICC, which is scheduled for Kampala in 2010, we bear in mind that a successful outcome could pave way for universality of the Rome Statute. According to the Rome Statute, the Review Conference is primarily to consider amendments to the Statute and we see that there are quite a number of proposed amendments, which this 8th Session is expected to process and send to the May/June Review. My delegation believe that we should not hesitate to schedule a resumed 8th Session if the need arises in order to give all amendments deserving consideration before passing them to the Review. Indeed, we also subscribe to having stocktaking of the international criminal justice system at the coming Review with a view to strengthen the ICC through cooperation, universality and complementarity.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the Nigerian delegation wishes to reiterate its commitment to and its continued support for the International Criminal Court.

Thank you.