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**INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT  
SIXTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES**

**GENERAL DEBATE**

**Statement by  
H. E. Ambassador António Cascais  
Head of Delegation  
Portugal**

**on behalf of the European Union**

New York, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007

*Please check against delivery*

Mr President,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Croatia\*, Turkey and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

Mr President,

2. First of all, the European Union would like to commend you Mr. President, the Bureau of the Assembly and its Secretariat, the Court, the Committee on Budget and Finance, the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims and the Working Groups in The Hague and New York for preparing a set of high-quality documents that will enable the Assembly to engage in rich discussion and take informed decisions. We warmly congratulate the new elected judges. Finally, we would like to pay tribute to the valuable contribution of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court and its members to advancing the objectives of the Court and adding value to its work.

Mr President,

3. 105 State Parties to the Rome Statute and 4 situations before the Court are significant achievements for a young Court. The Court is a living institution that has achieved substantial progress in its investigations and judicial proceedings in a very short time. The European Union echoes the UN Secretary General statement, marking the 5th anniversary of the Court, underlining that "*the ICC has already established itself as a centerpiece of a system of international criminal justice*". The EU reiterates its strong support for the work of the Court.

4. The importance of the ICC is to be seen in a wider context of the international legal order. The Court is critically placed to contribute to a more peaceful and just world, promoting respect for international humanitarian law, human rights and the rule of law. The European Union remains convinced that peace and justice are not conflicting goals. Quite on the contrary, in our view sustainable peace cannot be achieved if the demands for individual accountability for the most serious international crimes are not duly addressed.

The EU acknowledges that the ICC has furthermore become an essential instrument for the prevention of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes acting as deterrent for potential perpetrators. It should be stressed that the ICC is a fundamental tool to combat impunity when atrocities are committed, but it has also a positive role in helping to prevent and deter recourse to violence, promote negotiation and conflict resolution. These positive effects have been underlined recently by the United Nations Secretary-General, by the President of the Court and by expert reports.

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\* Croatia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Mr President,

9. Ending impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community is a priority for the European Union. In line with the European Union's Common Position and Action Plan, the EU and its Member States remain committed to supporting the universality and integrity of the Rome Statute and encourage other States Parties to intensify their efforts in this respect.

10. The EU welcomes the new States which have become parties to the Rome Statute since our last Assembly and notes with great satisfaction also the State parties and non-State parties to the Statute that have become parties to the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the Court.

In respect of achieving both universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute, we welcome the Plan of Action, which includes many of the activities currently undertaken by the European Union and its Member States. The EU looks forward to assisting States Parties in the implementation of the Rome Statute.

Mr President,

11. Let me make three further remarks on certain aspects that the EU views also as important in the work of this Assembly. Firstly on contributions to the Court's budget. Despite some improvement from last year's situation, the European Union wishes to draw attention to the importance for the Court's work of timely payment of the contributions, which are assessed by the Assembly in accordance with an agreed scale of assessment.

12. Secondly, last year this Assembly adopted an ambitious approach concerning outreach. We supported the final agreement but will carefully assess the results of the outreach activities.

13. Thirdly, the Rome Statute has recognized the central role of victims in the Court's proceedings and provided specific reparations for them. The EU welcome a key development in the Lubanga Trial where for the first time in the history of an international criminal court that victims participated in proceedings on their own right, without being called as witnesses. In this connection, the European Union wishes to call on States Parties to contribute to the Trust Fund for Victims.

To conclude, Mr. President,

14. Be assured that the EU and its Member States will maintain their public and diplomatic support to the Court and uphold its commitment in the fight against impunity for the most heinous crimes under international law.

15. The European Union looks forward to a thorough consideration with all delegations of the issues before this session of the Assembly of States Parties in a fruitful and open spirit.

I thank you, Mr. President.