

General Debate

**Review Conference of the
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
(Kampala, 31 May-11 June 2010)**

**Statement on behalf of
IRELAND**

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Head of Delegation**

Kampala, 1 June 2010

Mr President

I have the honour to address you on behalf of the Government of Ireland on the occasion of the Kampala Review Conference of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. As a Member State of the European Union, Ireland aligns itself with the statement of Spain delivered on behalf of the Union.

I would first like to express my delegation's thanks to the Government of Uganda for hosting the Conference at this impressive venue and for the warm welcome afforded to us.

I would also like to thank the President of the Assembly of States Parties, the Bureau, the Secretariat and all those involved in preparations for the Review Conference.

Mr President

This Review Conference provides us with an historic opportunity to reflect on developments since the Rome Conference and to plot the Court's future course. We will do this through taking stock of international justice and through considering proposed amendments of the Statute.

Insofar as stock-taking is concerned, it is important that we acknowledge and celebrate our achievements, as well as identifying improvements required and the means to secure them.

We should recognise the milestone embodied by the Court as the first permanent international judicial body charged with dealing with the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. At the same time, the Statute reiterates that the primary duty of combating impunity is placed on states. The Statute provides for due process rights for accused persons and recognises in innovative ways the crucial role of victims. The reality of gender-based violence as a feature of conflict is reflected by specific provisions on sexual offences.

It is also important to recall that since it was opened for signature on 17 July 1998, the Rome Statute has been ratified by 111 States from all regions of the world, with the largest group – 30 - coming from Africa. The Statute has also been signed by an additional 37 states. This is an impressive record, although we must continue to strive towards the goal of universality.

Mr President

Progress towards universality must also be matched by implementation of the Statute by States Parties. In Ireland, the International Criminal Court Act 2006 implemented all aspects of the Statute and the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities into domestic law.

Ensuring complementarity is a key part of all our efforts. In this regard, we should acknowledge the positive and landmark steps that African countries, such as our host Uganda, are making in establishing and strengthening national justice institutions. Ireland is committed to partnerships supporting post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation in a number of countries, including here in Uganda.

Mr President

The four items for discussion as part of the stock-taking exercise are all equally important, but I would like to take the opportunity to mention just one of them – Cooperation – for which Ireland has the honour to act as focal point, together with Costa Rica.

As we are all aware, the Court cannot act alone and requires cooperation from States Parties to fulfil its mandate. Assistance from other states, international organisations and civil society is also vital. Stocktaking of cooperation should provide for a comprehensive overview of the challenges and achievements with regard to the implementation of Parts 9 and 10 of the Rome Statute. Our discussion should seek to explore best practices based on our experience of the Court to date and also the invaluable lessons to be learnt from other international courts and tribunals. The discussion should foster a common understanding of further steps needed to improve cooperation in all its aspects.

The focal points have obtained the services of a very distinguished moderator, as well as highly qualified keynote speakers, who will address the Conference on different aspects of cooperation with a view to sparking a lively and interactive discussion.

Mr President

As well as stock-taking, the Review Conference will consider proposed amendments of the Rome Statute. The Conference will spend considerable time in its consideration of the Crime of Aggression, as mandated at Rome. The proposals before us reflect many years of hard work and discussion and deal with complex legal issues. We encourage all States to approach our discussions with the aim of reaching consensus.

The Conference will also discuss a proposed amendment of Article 8 of the Statute, sponsored by Belgium and co-sponsored by 18 other States Parties, including Ireland, from all regions of the world.

Mr President

In my delegation's view, the overall purpose of this Review Conference is to reaffirm our continuing commitment to the goals expressed so eloquently in the Rome Statute, to recognise our achievements and to identify ways of strengthening the Court for the future.

To borrow from the Irish poet and Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney, we are all dual citizens of the Republic of Conscience, charged to act as its ambassadors, and if we fulfil that mandate we will surely achieve our purpose here in Kampala.

Thank you Mr President.