



British Embassy  
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STATEMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND  
NORTHERN IRELAND

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ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE INTERNATIONAL  
CRIMINAL COURT

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Mr President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great pleasure to address this Assembly today on behalf of the United Kingdom. When making this statement I align myself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

First, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Sidiqi Kaba on his first year as President of the Assembly, and Judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi on her election as President of the Court.

I also congratulate those who have been elected to membership of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims and the Advisory Committee on Nominations. We are proud that the new members include Baroness Arminka Helić and Lord Justice Sir Adrian Fulford.

Mr President,

In my intervention today, I should like to focus on two key areas:

the continuing relevance of the Court; and  
the efficiency and effectiveness of the Court.

## Continuing Relevance of the Court

The UK's support for international criminal justice and accountability is a key element of our belief in a rules-based international order. The ICC has an important role to play in global efforts to end impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern, by holding perpetrators to account and achieving justice for victims.

During the last twelve months the world has witnessed many distressing and disturbing events involving gross violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity.

Such atrocities underline the continuing urgent need for action to protect civilians and prevent sexual violence in conflict and also the need for justice. Where national courts and other tribunals are willing and able to hold perpetrators to account and provide redress to victims, this is to be welcomed. Where they cannot, then the ICC must stand ready to act as a court of last resort, complementary to national legal systems.

Mr President,

This year the Court faced a heavy workload: 10 preliminary examinations and 9 situations under investigation, including two new investigations. We also note the Prosecutor's request to the Pre-Trial Chamber for authorisation to open a new investigation into the situation in Georgia.

We commend the Court for the progress made in its case load and for the manner in which it is tackling ongoing challenges. We call upon all States Parties to support the work of the Court, including through active cooperation in relation to investigations and prosecutions.

However, we also stress the vital need for States to respect the prosecutorial and judicial independence of the Court, and refrain from any steps that could be perceived as interference in the judicial process.

As an example of active State engagement with the Court, the UK has continued during the past year to provide the Office of the Prosecutor with full cooperation in relation to the reopened preliminary examination into allegations of abuses by UK forces in Iraq. As my Government has made clear, it rejects the allegation that there was any systematic abuse by British forces in Iraq, but we recognise that the Prosecutor must follow the proper procedures when serious complaints are made. We are confident that we have demonstrated to the Prosecutor that these matters are being thoroughly dealt with at national level – a clear demonstration of complementarity in action.

Mr President, turning to Efficiency and Effectiveness :

As the Court's workload increases, it becomes even more important that the Court uses its resources prudently. This is one of the UK's top priorities and we look to all branches of the Court for radical and innovative steps towards this goal. We look forward to the discussion

at this year's Assembly on the effectiveness and efficiency of Court proceedings.

In this context, we welcome the President's initiative to prioritise work on expediting judicial proceedings, as well as the ongoing project work on Performance Indicators for the Court. Important work has also been done on harmonising practices and improving working methods. And we congratulate the Registrar on the conclusion of ReVision, a major project to reorganise, streamline and strengthen the Court's Registry.

However, the Court also needs to be realistic in its calls for resources. Substantial year-on-year increases are not sustainable when national governments are themselves having to meet the challenges of austerity by significant reductions in their budgets.

But equally, it goes without saying that States Parties must meet their financial obligations to the Court in a timely manner.

Mr President

In 2016 the Court will move to new permanent premises, a significant step which will herald the start of a new era for the ICC.

2016 also promises to be another very busy year for the Court, with an unprecedented number of four trials taking place simultaneously.

On behalf of the UK, I pledge my Government's continued strong support for the Court as it rises to the challenges of its increasing workload and continues its important work in the fight against impunity.