



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

by

H.E. Ambassador Philip Sealy
Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago
to the United Nations

on

Agenda Item 74 - Report of the International Criminal Court.
during the 61st Session of the
United Nations General Assembly



United Nations
New York,
October 9, 2006

Madame President,

Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the second report of the President of the International Criminal Court (ICC) made pursuant to the Agreement between the Court and the United Nations. Trinidad and Tobago also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the members of CARICOM that are States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Madame President,

During the past year the ICC has demonstrated that the role entrusted to it by members of the international community as a permanent penal institution in the fight against impunity and a beacon of hope for those victims seeking justice against the perpetrators of crimes which shock the conscience of all humanity, is not misplaced.

In a relatively short period of time since the entry into force of the Rome Statute and the election of its first bench of judges, the ICC has not only commenced investigations into atrocities committed against hapless victims of crimes within its jurisdiction in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Uganda and in the Darfur Region of Sudan, but was also able to receive and commence proceedings against an accused person.

Madame President,

Trinidad and Tobago views these developments as important milestones not only in the promotion and enforcement of the rule of law but also as important pillars in building bridges for the maintenance of international peace and security. Nevertheless, we are mindful that these developments, as important as they are, were only possible with the cooperation received by the Court from the referring States, the United Nations, States Parties and non-governmental organizations.

In this regard, we note with appreciation the cooperation agreements entered into by the Court with the Government of Austria, the European Union and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and those to be concluded in the near future with the African Union and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization. Madame President, it is only through such cooperation agreements that the Court would be able to gather evidence, provide logistical support to operations in the field, carry out the arrest and surrender of accused persons and enforce sentences. Without the successful completion of these procedural requirements, the Court will not be able to implement its mandate effectively and thus contribute to ending impunity.

Madame President,

Trinidad and Tobago applauds the efforts made by the Court through its outreach programme to bring greater awareness and understanding of its work to the communities where situations have been referred to it either by States or by the Security Council. We recognize, however, that universal adherence to the Rome Statute is an essential component in the fight against impunity wherever it may occur, and would therefore urge States Parties and others to assist the Court in engaging in outreach activities aimed at promoting increased ratification of and accession to the Statute. In this vein, Trinidad and Tobago continues to work with the NGO community and the CARICOM Secretariat in promoting ratification and accession in the Caribbean region and welcomes the recent adherence by the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the Statute.

Madame President

Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to the Rome Statute is long standing. In this connection recently at the internal level, comprehensive legislation has been enacted giving full domestic legal effect to the Rome Statute.

Madame President,

In March of this year, six (6) judges started their terms of office for a nine-year period. This was due to a process of transparent elections which resulted in the re-election of five (5) of them and the election of a new female member of the Court from Bulgaria, Professor Ekaterina Trendafilova. We would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Judge Neroni Slade of Samoa for his important contributions to the initial work of the Court. We also witnessed the establishment of the New York Liaison Office in an effort to assist the ICC in the area of cooperation with the United Nations. We view the establishment of this office as also another opportunity for the Court to gain greater visibility in the eyes of the international community present in New York, which we hope would lead to its universal acceptance. Correspondingly, the same could be said of the decision by the Assembly of States Parties to hold its fifth resumed session and its sixth session in New York in 2007.

Madame President,

The report of the President of the ICC comes at a time when the international community has not been able to achieve the type of international peace and security and respect for international law, and in particular International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, contemplated by the founders of the United Nations. Despite the sometimes seemingly unattainable goal of achieving the aforementioned objectives, Trinidad and Tobago strongly believes that the ICC represents hope for all mankind. Although the ICC is not directly involved in the prosecution of accused persons before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the ICC is providing critical support to these tribunals. This level of support goes beyond mere cooperation in an emerging system of international criminal justice. It is moreover due to growing recognition of the ICC as a truly special Court, not only because of its permanent nature as an organ to prosecute and punish those who commit crimes within its jurisdiction and bring relief to victims through the provision of reparations and other forms of assistance, but also due to its cadre of distinguished judges, prosecutors, registrars and general staff who continue to meet the daily challenges which bedevil this new institution established by all of us, people of conscience who dared to declare that the perpetrators of crimes against humanity and other heinous crimes should not go unpunished.

I thank you, Madame President.