

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Opening Statement by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at the Fifth Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the International Criminal Court, 24 November 2006

Mr President,

I would like to make a short statement on behalf of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom also subscribes to the position of the European Union as set out in the statement made on the EU's behalf yesterday by the representative of Finland.

Firstly, our thanks to you, Mr President, for your ongoing role in and personal commitment to the evolution of the International Criminal Court. Thanks also to the able Renan Villacis and his colleagues at the ASP Secretariat. We are grateful, as always, to the Government of the Netherlands as host to the Court.

I would also like to express our thanks to the President, Judges, elected officials and all the personnel of the Court for their hard work during the course of 2006. We are conscious that, for many staff of the Court, this work takes place in challenging and at times dangerous conditions on the ground.

We welcome the states who have recently become States Parties to the Rome Statute, and we hope to see further ratifications in the near future. The progress made towards ratification by a number of states, including Japan, is encouraging. Japanese accession would be another significant milestone for the consolidation of the Court, and we will work constructively to achieve that goal.

As others have noted, it has been an historic year for the ICC. The transfer for trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo is a major step forward in the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern. The United Kingdom is committed to working with the Court and with partners to ensure that this momentum is maintained. This is particularly important in the context of the execution of arrest warrants, one of the key challenges facing the Court.

The United Kingdom would like to reiterate its view that, in northern Uganda and elsewhere, the goals of peace and justice are not mutually exclusive. Indeed it is our view that justice is a necessary component of sustainable peace. We continue to support a successful resolution of the peace talks in northern Uganda compatible with international law and the Rome Statute.

As representatives of the ICC have made clear, the Court's success depends on practical co-operation in various areas. I urge States Parties, if they have not yet done so, to explore providing assistance to the Court in fields such as witness protection, information-sharing and sentence enforcement.

The United Kingdom is looking forward to engaging with ICC States Parties and other interested parties on the agenda before us at this year's Assembly. We welcome

the good progress which has been made throughout the year on many of the key issues, and thank those who have participated in the relevant discussions, as well as the Co-ordinators in The Hague and New York.

We welcome our ongoing dialogue with non-governmental organisations on these issues, and pay tribute to the wider contribution of NGOs to advancing the objectives of the Court and adding value to its work.

The United Kingdom would like to express its highest appreciation for the role of the Committee on Budget and Finance, which plays an invaluable role in providing expert, impartial advice to States Parties. We look forward to participating in discussions on the budget taking the CBF's report and recommendations as our guide.

We are also grateful to national technical experts for their involvement on the question of the Court's premises. They have played an important role in the considerable progress which has been made on this issue in recent months. We hope that further progress can be agreed by States Parties this year and at future ASPs.

The United Kingdom welcomes the Court's elaboration of an overall strategic plan and a detailed strategic plan for outreach. These will be valuable tools both for taking forward the Court's work over the coming years and as mechanisms against which its impact can be regularly evaluated. We welcome the Court's commitment to continued dialogue with States as it works to fulfil its mandate fairly, effectively and independently whilst seeking to ensure the most efficient use of the resources contributed by States Parties.

On the Crime of Aggression, we look forward to participating in the Working Groups' continuing efforts to work towards a draft which can command wide acceptance.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors of the Victims Trust Fund. Earlier this year, the United Kingdom made a further contribution – of £50,000 – to the Fund, and looks forward to seeing the Fund's substantive work taken forward during the course of 2007 and beyond.

The United Kingdom was also pleased to contribute to facilitating the participation of as many States Parties as possible in the Assembly's meetings through a contribution this year of £15,000 to the Trust Fund for the Participation of the Least Developed Countries.

Mr President, in closing I would like to emphasise the United Kingdom's continuing commitment to support the International Criminal Court, and the other international criminal tribunals, in the fight against impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

As States Parties, we must each redouble our efforts to ensure the further rapid consolidation of the Court as a central pillar of international justice.

Thank you.