

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

It is my honour to address you during this momentous chapter in life of the International Criminal Court.

We highly appreciate your commitment and are grateful for your tireless efforts in fighting to ensure justice worldwide despite the trying times for the world that year 2020 has brought about and We, as members of Ukraine's civil society, stand in solidarity with all of you and those who continue to fight against global impunity.

In 2014 Ukrainian people fell victim to the armed conflict in their own territory which is still ongoing and grave crimes continue to be committed here and now. It is true that our motivation to join the global fight against impunity originates from the tragedy, however, joining the international justice community has opened up a whole world where the true meaning of humanity and justice can always be found to remind each of us of our own humanity and the kind of justice that each state should aspire to.

The International Criminal Court was set up as and despite the existing challenges remains the greatest symbol of international justice, it is a reminder why justice matters. It is also true that it currently is not living through its brightest moment as evidenced by the Independent Expert Review report. Indeed, there are many serious challenges before it and some may even refer to them as insurmountable. Yet, for young states like Ukraine, states tarnished by armed conflicts, whose underdeveloped legal systems have suffered devastating effects the International Criminal Court remains a beacon, a driving force behind changes and a guiding star for implementing and applying the highest legal standards at the state level, thereby making the domestic legal systems stronger, more just and people oriented.

There are no ideal public institutions and the majority of them have never and will never be under as much scrutiny as the ICC. Because the whole world is looking up to and expects the ICC to be flawless. But are those reasonable expectations? In our view, it would be imprudent to perceive all the letdowns and underachievements of the Court so far as signs of a failed project. Rather they should be perceived as an opportunity to continue to work on them even harder, an incentive to right the wrongs and this way strengthen the Court each and every time. Indeed, to build a global court with no flaws will require a lot of effort on the part of all of us who believe in the international justice, because for us the answer to the ultimate question: does the world need the International Criminal Court is always "Yes".

Unfortunately, despite reassurances of adherence to the rule of law and international legal order the state of Ukraine is yet to ratify the Rome Statute. We, as civil society, remain fully dedicated to advocating and promoting ratification and implementation of the Rome Statute into national legislation and adhering to the principle of complementarity and will continue to do so vigorously.

To this end, while We are hoping for the OTP's prompt decision to open an investigation into the situation in Ukraine, We would also like to ask the ICC and its member - states to encourage and urge the Ukrainian leadership to ratify and implement the Rome Statute as soon as possible, thereby creating necessary legal framework for ensuring justice for the victims of grave crimes, to share your knowledge and expertise of building effective war crimes departments within Ukrainian prosecutorial and investigative authorities, to build effective cooperation in creating an effective complementarity mechanism in order to successfully prosecute and adjudicate international crimes at the domestic level.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Success of the global justice project depends on the quality and scale of the joint efforts, and while it is imperative that we as civil society direct our efforts both ways, to support the Court on its way to growing

into an institution that it was envisaged to be and continue our tireless efforts to contribute to developing and strengthening domestic legal systems, NGOs cannot replace the Governments. Only by coming together do we stand a chance to achieve success in this ultimate endeavor to build and to live in a more just world, where there is no place for cruelty, corruption, deceit and where humanity and justice are not just a distant aspiration but a close reality.

Thank you for your attention.

Nadia Volkova

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