



Kingdom of Belgium

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Karen Van Vlierberge, Ambassador, Deputy
Permanent Representative

Interactive panel discussion on the occasion of International Justice Day

**« 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute : the need for universality
and the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction over the crime of
aggression »**

New York, 17 July 2018

Ministers
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Belgium is today very pleased to cosponsor this international panel discussion on the occasion of International Justice Day.

I would like first to thank Minister Frick and the very active Mission of Liechtenstein for organizing this event. We praise the efforts of Liechtenstein to promote the ratification of the Rome Statute and its amendments, as well as its constant support to the International Criminal Court (ICC). I also extend my warm thanks to President Lajčák and the other panelists for their thoughtful interventions.

Twenty years ago, in Rome, representatives of future States Parties signed the statute establishing the ICC. Despite its young age, the Court has already been able to demonstrate its full purpose. It has been active in many ways and in all regions of the world, taking account of the primary responsibility of States to investigate and prosecute atrocity crimes in accordance with the principle of complementarity. Of course, this has not been without challenges and some improvement is definitely needed. But how could it be otherwise for such an ambitious project?

The fight against impunity has been at the heart of Belgium's action for many years. For this reason, my country has supported the ICC from the very outset by means of diplomatic and judicial cooperation. It was amongst the first States to ratify the Rome Statute and has since continuously worked to consolidate the Court's legal framework.

Belgium played an active role in the First Review Conference in Kampala in 2010, whereby States parties agreed on a consensual definition of the crime of aggression and on the conditions for the Court to exercise its jurisdiction over that crime. On a Belgian proposal, States parties also made punishable some war crimes to the same extent regardless whether they have been committed during a conflict of an international character or not.

Belgium thereafter continued on this path by engaging actively with Liechtenstein and others to activate the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression for the sake of peace and security.

At the same time, we worked tirelessly to add to the jurisdiction of the Court three new war crimes pertaining to the use of weapons that cause immense suffering or kill in an indiscriminate way. Both processes were concluded successfully last December at the Assembly of State Parties meeting here in New York.

Justice is today still one of the core elements towards reconciliation and sustaining peace. With the alarming proliferation of the gravest crimes around the world and the culture of impunity unfortunately still prevailing in many countries, the ICC is needed more than ever. Belgium has already ratified some of the amendments and is on the process to ratify those most recently adopted .

My delegation encourages all State Parties to ratify all the Rome Statute's amendments and also invite non-State Parties to consider ratifying the Rome Statute in its most updated version. Universality will strengthen a system which above all aims at rendering justice to the victims of the most atrocious crimes, no matter where they have been perpetrated. It will further contribute to creating a world where those crimes become less likely. Belgium is committed to consistently and concretely continue to promote these essential objectives.

Thank you.