

## Launch of ICC OTP's Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes

### Video statement

Dear colleagues and friends,

I sorely regret that I cannot be with you in person for this launch, and for this assembly of States party to the ICC. In fact, this is the first meeting of Assembly of States Parties that I will miss.

Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's initiative to issue a Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes is an important step forward, to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of these sadly widespread crimes.

The Policy Paper will also help us to continue speaking clearly about sexual and gender-based crimes *as crimes*.

Crimes that occur on a massive scale in war-torn countries, but also in times of peace.

Crimes that may take the form of sexual and non-sexual attacks on individuals targeted because of their gender.

Crimes that may be perpetrated against women and men, and that too often target the most vulnerable, notably children, girls and boys, young women, and also older women.

I commend Prosecutor Bensouda for her continuing pledge to examine the gender aspects of all crimes within the ICC's jurisdiction – looking at how they are related to inequalities between women and men.

I applaud her commitment to framing charges in ways that acknowledge the severity and multifaceted character of sexual and gender-based crimes, including bringing cumulative charges, and considering the whole range of modes of liability under the Statute.

The renewed priority that this document gives to sexual and gender-based crimes comes not a minute too soon.

Sexual and gender-based crimes continue unabated.

Last month, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria reported appalling sexual crimes by the so-called ISIL group, with sexual enslavement of abducted women and girls, and rape on a massive scale. In other parts of the world, fact-finding missions have also provided detailed and harrowing accounts of sexual and gender-based crimes.

For too long, these crimes have been a taboo topic, stigmatizing the victims and filling them with misplaced shame, and even feelings of guilt.

These crimes must not be tolerated: they must instead be met with effective investigation and prosecution, at the domestic level, and also, crucially, at the international level.

It is my hope that this new Policy Paper will not only guide the work of the ICC's Prosecutor; but that it will be influential in the broader context of international and national justice.

Thank you.