

**Statement by
H.E. Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Hon'ble Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament at the
Symposium on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute**

The Hague, 17 July 2018

Hon'ble President of ICC

Hon'ble President of the Assembly of States Parties

Excellencies

Distinguished Participants

Respected Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honour and a special privilege for me to be here joining the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the adoption of Rome Statute, the founding instrument of the International Criminal Court. As a member of the ICC, I take this opportunity to congratulate all the member-States to the Rome Statute, as well as everyone associated with the ICC for their unflinching stand on the side of humanity for the last twenty years, and the days to come.

I would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the Registry of the ICC for organizing this commemorative event. This is an occasion not only to celebrate, but also to commit and act against the crimes that undermine the very basics of human dignity. It is a reminder that bringing justice to the most vulnerable also allows us to build bridges across cultural barriers, and connect on the basis of humanity.

Distinguished Participants,

It is a matter of pride for me that I represent a country which was at the forefront of the global campaign for the early adoption of the Rome Statute and the creation of the ICC. As a nation we have committed ourselves towards bringing an end of impunity to the war crimes, genocides, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression.

Today, on the occasion of ICC's 20th Anniversary, I reiterate our unequivocal support to the Rome Statute, the ICC and the principles of global criminal justice as it continues to evolve.

Our conviction to such an instrument has been as old as the struggle that led to our independence more than four decades ago. During our war of independence in 1971, three million innocent civilians were killed and 200,000 women endured sexual and gender-based violence.

Following the complementarity principle of Rome Statute, we have ensured trial of those perpetrators, who committed war crimes, genocides and crimes against humanity in 1971. Undertaking this challenging task, we have demonstrated our staunch commitment to the Rome Statute.

Bearing the memory of the 200,000 women and girls, who were subjected to sexual and gender-based crimes, and torture during our Liberation War, the Government of Bangladesh is recognizing, in phases, those women and girls as freedom fighters to demonstrate our firm commitment to reparative justice.

The world has once again witnessed the devastating consequences of a prevalent culture of impunity in our neighbouring state, Myanmar. Since 25th August 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingyas - majority of whom are women and children - have entered into our territory to flee from what the UN Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and Responsibility to Protect have termed as atrocity crimes, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as a 'text book example of ethnic cleansing'.

The Government of Bangladesh - with the support of international community - has extended massive humanitarian assistance to these Rohingyas. In tandem with international efforts, our government is looking forward to facilitating the voluntary return of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas to their homes in safety, security, and dignity. In conversation with UN and civil society representatives, these forcibly displaced Rohingyas have underscored the need for bringing to justice those responsible for such heinous crimes against them.

We are encouraged at the initiative of the Prosecution seeking ruling on the application of jurisdiction on Myanmar, a non-member to ICC for the crime of forced deportation of the Rohingyas to Bangladesh. As a party to the Rome Statute, Bangladesh has responded favourably to the invitation of the Court and submitted relevant information to the Pre-Trial Chamber 1.

Considering the value and necessity of reparative justice alongside the retributive justice, I would like to encourage States Parties and potential donors to provide enhanced and predictable resources to allow the Trust Fund for Victims to make a real difference in the lives of the victims of war crimes, genocides and crimes against humanity.

As an ardent promoter of International Criminal Court, we recognize the importance of the universalization of Rome Statute and remain ready to support the Court in all its endeavours for achieving universalization. It is essential for each of us, as member States, to reflect on how better we can uphold the principles underlying the Rome Statute, and support the ICC in the challenges it faces. It is also important to think of our collective strength, and consider how regional cooperatives can work together to empower the ICC and help achieve its goals.

At the 20th Anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, we should also pause to think about the future. As the world becomes smaller, and borders are superseded by technological progress, we must consider the legacy we are leaving for future generations. It is important to envision a future for the ICC, and how it will deal with crimes against humanity as the very nature and the methodology of such crimes start to change.

Representation in the ICC will also be a key factor. It is crucial to remain engaged with those who are most vulnerable. Given the influence ICC has, it is essential that those who are being served by the ICC have a voice in the development of the proceedings. The ICC must remain flexible and open to new ideas and voices as it builds on a young institution in order to remain relevant in the coming decades. And relevant the ICC must remain if we are to put an end to the culture of impunity, uphold the rule of law and ensure access to justice for all peoples.

Excellencies,

We are committed towards creating a world free from discrimination, sufferings and injustice. Bangladesh looks forward to working together with all towards achieving that goal, which is to put an end to the culture of impunity and ensure that the perpetrators of the world's most heinous crimes are brought to justice.

I want to conclude with a Quotation of Mary Wollstonecraft –

“It is Justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world.”

I thank you.

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