

Remarks by Mr. Pavel Zeman, Supreme State Attorney of the Czech Republic, at the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the ICC
(The Hague, 17th July 2018)

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Dear Mr. President, Excellences, distinguished guests,

It is an honour for me to be here today on behalf of the Czech Republic to commemorate this important anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, to reflect on the past 20 years and to look to the future of the court.

The Czech Republic is strongly committed to the idea of international criminal justice, in particular the ICC. Given our country's historical experience with perpetration of serious crimes under international law and serious human rights abuses, we consider the ICC to be irreplaceable.

The current 123 States Parties have created a unique and coherent system to combat impunity at the national and international level, framed by the principle of complementarity. As we continue to witness crimes under international law being committed in different parts of the world I believe that the role of the ICC is becoming more important than ever.

With all of the success that the court has achieved so far, there are still some remaining challenges and let me just mention a couple. There are situations which are out of reach of the ICC, and the absence of jurisdiction is depriving victims of the justice to be delivered. This is certainly something that should be improved. The political will to refer those situations to the ICC is necessary. The ICC as a judicial body cannot do its job when it does not have jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, opening or a referral of a situation to the ICC is just a starting point. The cooperation of States under ICC's jurisdiction remains crucial. The cooperation is both a legal obligation and a practical need in order for the Court to be efficient. The cases of non-cooperation are concerning and we call on States Parties to fulfil their obligations to cooperate.

I understand that these are some of the topics that will be dealt with in more detail in the afternoon portion of the programme and I am certain that many interesting and useful ideas will come out of those discussions.

This particular commemoration is also marked with the activation of the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. The Czech Republic welcomed the activation decision taken at the last Assembly of States Parties in December 2017 and we believe that this is a significant step forward in order to enhance protection of States from this crime.

To conclude, I would like to use this opportunity to express our thanks and gratitude to all of you – judges, diplomats, members of the academia, non-governmental organisations, the ICC staff and others - who have over the last 20 years helped to build the court into the indispensable institution it is today. We appreciate it very much and will continue to support you as much as we can.

Thank you for your attention.