Cour Pénale Internationale



International Criminal Court

Original: English No. ICC-01/14-01/22

Date: 27 March 2023

PRE-TRIAL CHAMBER II

Before: Judge Rosario Salvatore Aitala, Presiding

Judge Tomoko Akane

Judge Sergio Gerardo Ugalde Godínez

SITUATION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC II IN THE CASE OF THE PROSECUTOR v. MAXIME JEOFFROY ELI MOKOM GAWAKA

Public

Decision on the legal representation of victims

Decision to be notified in accordance with regulation 31 of the Regulations of the Court to:

The Office of the Prosecutor

Mr Karim A. A. Khan Mr Mame Mandiaye Niang Mr Kweku Vanderpuye Counsel for Mr Mokom Mr Philippe Larochelle

Legal Representatives of Victims

Legal Representatives of Applicants

Unrepresented Victims

Unrepresented Applicants for Participation/Reparations

The Office of Public Counsel

for Victims

Ms Paolina Massidda

The Office of Public Counsel

for the Defence

States Representatives

Amicus Curiae

REGISTRY

Registrar Mr Peter Lewis Counsel Support Section
Mr Pieter Vanaverbeke

Detention Section

Victims and Witnesses Unit

Victims Participation and Reparations Section Mr Philipp Ambach Other

PRE-TRIAL CHAMBER II of the International Criminal Court issues this 'Decision on the legal representation of victims'.

I. PROCEDURAL HISTORY

- 1. On 14 March 2022, Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka ('Mr Mokom') was surrendered to the Court and arrived at the Detention Centre.¹
- 2. On 25 March 2022, the Chamber ordered the Registry to revoke the appointment of Mr Nicholas Kaufman ('Mr Kaufman') as Mr Mokom's counsel due to an impediment to representation or a conflict of interest.²
- 3. On 1 April 2022, the Chamber, *inter alia*, instructed the Registry to appoint duty counsel for Mr Mokom.³ On the same day, Mr Gregory Townsend was appointed as Duty Counsel for Mr Mokom ('Duty Counsel').⁴
- 4. On 17 May 2022, the Chamber, *inter alia*, instructed the Registry to submit observations in relation to victims' applications for participation, including on the legal representation of victims.⁵
- 5. On 25 May 2022, the Registry provided its observations on aspects related to the legal representation of victims (the 'Registry 25 May 2022 Observations').⁶

¹ Warrant of Arrest for Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, 10 December 2018, ICC-01/14-01/22-2-US-Exp (a redacted, under seal, *ex parte*, only available to the Prosecutor and the Victims and Witnesses Unit, version was issued on 31 January 2019, ICC-01/14-01/22-2-US-Exp-Red; a public redacted version was issued on 22 March 2022, ICC-01/14-01/22-2-Red2).

² Order to the Registry concerning the appointment of Mr Nicholas Kaufman as counsel for Mr Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, ICC-01/14-01/22-26-Conf-Exp, confidential and *ex parte*, only available to the Prosecution, Mr Kaufman, Mr Mokom, and the Registry (a public redacted version was issued on 13 June 2022, ICC-01/14-01/22-26-Red).

³ Order convening a status conference and instructing the Registry to appoint duty counsel for Mr Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, ICC-01/14-01/22-32-Conf-Exp, confidential and *ex parte*, only available to Mr Mokom and the Registry.

⁴ Notification of the Appointment of Mr Gregory Townsend as Duty Counsel for Mr Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, 4 April 2022, ICC-01/14-01/22-33-Conf-Exp, confidential and *ex parte*, only available to Mr Mokom and the Registry, with Annex I, confidential and *ex parte*, only available to Mr Mokom and the Registry.

⁵ Order seeking observations on matters related to the conduct of the confirmation proceedings, ICC-01/14-01/22-50, public.

⁶ Registry Observations pursuant to Pre-Trial Chamber II's "Order seeking observations on matters related to the conduct of the confirmation Proceedings" (ICC-01/14-01/22-50), ICC-01/14-01/22-55, public, paras 23-36, with public annexes I and II, and confidential, *ex parte*, only available to the Registry, annex III. The Prosecution informed the Chamber that it did not intend to file a response to the Registry's observations (see email from the Prosecution to the Chamber, 3 June 2022, at 12:01).

- 6. On 27 June 2022, the Chamber: (i) assigned the Office of Public Counsel for Victims (the 'OPCV') to represent the collective interests of potential victims until the Chamber's eventual decision on the legal representation of victims; and (ii) instructed the Registry to collect information on legal representation and provide a report on this matter (the '27 June 2022 Order').7
- On 7 October 2022, pursuant to the Chamber's further instructions, 8 the Registry 7. the legal representation of potential victims transmitted its report on (the 'Registry Report').9
- 8. On 11 October 2022, the OPCV submitted its observations on the Registry Report (the 'OPCV Observations'), 10 and a report on its activities (the 'OPCV Report'). 11
- 9. On 14 October 2022, Duty Counsel filed 'Mr Mokom's Observations on the Registry's Report' (the 'Duty Counsel Observations'). 12
- On 23 January 2023, following the Appeals Chamber's confirmation of the Chamber's decision to remove Mr Kaufman, ¹³ Mr Philippe Larochelle was appointed as Permanent Counsel for Mr Mokom ('Permanent Counsel'). 14
- On 8 February 2023, Permanent Counsel, pursuant to the Chamber's order, ¹⁵ filed the 'Mokom Defence Observations on Matters Related to the Participation of

Order on the conduct of the confirmation of charges proceedings, ICC-01/14-01/22-62, public.
 Email from the Chamber to the Registry on 15 September 2022, at 15:25.

⁹ Registry Report on Legal Representation of Victims, ICC-01/14-01/22-98, public, with one annex, confidential and ex parte, only available to the Registry, ICC-01/14-01/22-98-Anx-Conf-Exp (a public redacted version of the annex was issued on the same day, ICC-01/14-01/22-98-Anx-Red).

¹⁰ Observations on Registry's Report in Relation to the Legal Representation of Victims, ICC-01/14-01/22-100, public.

¹¹ Report on the Activities of the Office of Public Counsel for Victims pursuant to the "Order on the conduct of the confirmation of charges proceedings" (ICC-01/14-01/22-62), ICC-01/14-01/22-99, public.

¹² ICC-01/14-01/22-103, public.

¹³ Judgment on the appeal of Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka against the decision of Pre-Trial Chamber II of 19 August 2022 entitled "Decision on legal representation further to the Appeals Chamber's judgment of 19 July 2022", ICC-01/14-01/22-124-Conf, confidential, together with an annex containing the dissenting opinion of Judges Bossa and Ibáñez Carranza (public redacted versions of the decision and the annex were issued on the same day, ICC-01/14-01/22-124-Red and ICC-01/14-01/22-

¹⁴ Registry, Notification of the Appointment of Mr Philippe Larochelle as Counsel for Mr Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, ICC-01/14-01/22-136, public, with Annexes I, II and IV, public and Annex III. confidential.

¹⁵ Order for observations and decision on the Prosecution's request for a status conference, 24 January 2023, ICC-01/14-01/22-138, public.

Victims', in which no observations on the Registry Report or the victims' legal representation were made.¹⁶

- 12. On 9 March 2023, the Prosecution filed the Document Containing the Charges (the 'DCC').¹⁷
- 13. On 15 March 2023, the Registry, pursuant to the Chamber's order of 24 February 2023 and a variation of the time limit granted on 2 March 2023,¹⁸ supplemented the Registry Report (the 'Addendum').¹⁹

II. SUBMISSIONS

A. Registry Report

- 14. The Registry indicates that it has undertaken a number of activities to inform victims about the present case, support the victim application process, and collect information.
- 15. The Registry highlights that it has collected the following information:
 - The victims participating in The Prosecutor v. Alfred Yekatom and Patrice-(i) Edouard Ngaïssona case (the 'Yekatom and Ngaïssona case') consulted wish to be represented by the same lawyer(s) representing them in the Yekatom and Ngaïssona case. Some new applicants in the present case (the 'New Applicants') wish have two counsel – Mr Yaré Fall ('Mr Fall') and Ms Elisabeth Rabesandratana ('Ms Rabesandratana') – representing victims in the Yekatom and Ngaïssona case appointed in the present case as well. A number of New Applicants also indicate that the appointment of the lawyer of their choice, i.e. Me Francis Ouabizon-Tendouli ('Mr Tendouli'), is a precondition for their participation and refuse to be represented by the OPCV.

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¹⁶ <u>ICC-01/14-01/22-155</u>, public.

¹⁷ Prosecution's Submission of the Document Containing the Charges, ICC-01/14-01/22-174, public, with annexes A-D, confidential (public redacted versions of annexes A and B were submitted on 13 March 2013, ICC-01/14-01/22-174-AnxA-Red and ICC-01/14-01/22-174-AnxB-Red).

¹⁸ Email from the Chamber to the Registry on 24 February 2023, at 14:59; email from the Chamber to the Registry on 2 March 2023, at 16:48.

¹⁹ Addendum to "Registry Report on Legal Representation of Victims" (ICC-01/14-01/22-98), ICC-01/14-01/22-176-Conf-Exp, confidential and *ex parte*, only available to the Registry (following the Chamber's order issued by email on 20 March 2023, at 12:52, the Registry informed the Chamber, by way of email dated 23 March 2023, at 15:56, that the Addendum may be reclassified as public).

- (ii) All six Legal Representatives for Victims in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case (the 'LRVs') manifest their interest to represent victims in the present case. Four of the LRVs propose to replicate the legal representation scheme and composition in place in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case, based on their familiarity with the cases and stakeholders. However, the two OPCV counsel assert that such organisation could be time consuming and less efficient.
- (iii) Victims participating in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case and New Applicants indicate that their lawyer should possess the following characteristics: (i) be available, accessible, and close to them; (ii) be competent and demonstrate work ethics such as honesty, loyalty, or integrity; and (iii) be from or reside in the Central African Republic (the 'CAR'), have experienced or knowledge of the events and speak Sango.
- (iv) Civil society organisations (the 'CSOs') emphasise that victims lack knowledge and understanding regarding victims' rights, judicial proceedings and the role of lawyers. The CSOs also highlight that the lawyer's availability and accessibility is key. In this regard, the CSOs note that victims participating in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case had indicated a general lack of contact with their legal representatives and a lack of information regarding the proceedings. The CSOs also aver that lawyers should be accountable, committed, competent, experienced, and able to understand the victims' realities.
- (v) 140 New Applicants object to being represented by a lawyer also representing other victims, although the Registry notes that the majority of the applicants seemed to have linked the question of grouping to their choice of legal representative rather than to a conflict of interest. Three victims participating in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case do not want to be grouped with other victims, because of issues related to their victimhood. In this regard, the LRVs and the CSOs have not identified the need for groups of victims other than the existing two in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case, namely a Former Child Soldiers group and a Victims of Other Crimes group.
- (vi) It is to be expected that any victims that may be admitted in the present case will rely exclusively on the financial assistance that may be provided by the Court under its legal aid budget for their legal representation.

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- 16. With regard to rule 90(4) of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence (the 'Rules'), the Registry notes that the allegations against Mr Mokom in the Warrant of Arrest include enlisting children under the age of 15 years in the forces affiliated to the Anti-Balaka and participating in crimes committed against the Muslim population and others perceived to support the Seleka group. On the basis of its experience, the Registry asserts that: (i) there may be tensions between the victim group of former child soldiers and the victim group targeted by the Anti-Balaka that would make it unlikely that they would accept to be represented by the same legal representatives; and (ii) it is doubtful whether a legal representative representing victims from both groups would be in a position to equally and fairly represent their respective positions.
- 17. The Registry points out the advantages of appointing the same representation scheme from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case in the present case, including the familiarity of the LRVs with the present case and the victims by virtue of the overlap between the two cases, but notes that: (i) having multiple counsel acting commonly as lead counsel in a single team may present coordination challenges; and (ii) legal representatives face enormous challenges to effectively communicate with the victims they represent.
- 18. On this basis, the Registry recommends that Mr Dmytro Suprun of the OPCV be appointed to represent the Former Child Soldiers group. The Registry further recommends two options regarding the Victims of Other Crimes group: (i) maintaining the same system of common legal representation as adopted in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case, and assigning the five remaining LRVs from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case, joined by Mr Tendouli, to represent this group. The Registry adds that, if this option is followed, some measures for enhanced efficiency of the team should be implemented, including taking decisions on legal submissions by majority and implementing a system of a more delineated distribution of tasks; or (ii) organising common legal representation under rule 90(3) of the Rules through a competitive process for the legal representatives identified in the Registry Report.
- 19. The Registry asserts that, in any case, the system of representation would benefit from a constant assessment of the actual victims' level of access, trust and confidence in their counsel. Therefore, the Registry proposes to put in place a monitoring scheme that would consist of: (i) regular communication/meetings between the Registry and the common legal representatives; and (ii) an instruction from the Chamber to the Registry

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to seek the victims' views on their participation after the decision on the confirmation of charges is issued; and (iii) a reporting system implemented by the Registry recording, assessing and channelling to the Chamber any incident related to the victims' legal representation.

B. Addendum

- 20. The Registry submits that, in addition to the potential common legal representatives identified in its Report, some applicants wish to have Mr Mayombo Kassongo ('Mr Kassongo') appointed in the present case.
- 21. The Registry indicates that it has collected the following information from its consultations with the potential common legal representatives: (i) Mr Fall, Ms Rabesandratana, Mr Abdou Dangabo Moussa ('Mr Dangabo Moussa'), Ms Marie-Edith Douzima-Lawson ('Ms Douzima'), Mr Tendouli and Mr Kassongo confirm their willingness to represent within a single team victims in the present case, and agree to share amongst themselves the resources allocated to one team under the legal aid budget; and (ii) Ms Paolina Massidda ('Ms Massidda') of the OPCV is unavailable to represent the victims in the present case but remains committed to represent the collective interests of potential victims until a final decision is made on their legal representation. Ms Massidda reiterates that potentially seven counsel acting and deciding jointly could be time-consuming and less efficient.
- 22. Regarding Mr Kassongo and Mr Tendouli, the Registry notes that they are new to the representation of victims in the CAR II Situation and have been designated by a relatively low number of applicants (respectively 11 and 55 applicants while 574 applications were received to date in the present case and 1400 victims participate in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case). In this regard, the Registry asserts that these applicants reside in areas which should be accessible to the LRVs from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case, and that the Registry is in a position to contact these applicants to explain to them any decision taken by the Chamber in relation to their legal representation. Regarding Mr Kassongo, the Registry states that he regularly requests fees for almost full time work for his involvement in *The Prosecutor v. Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi* and *The Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud* cases and that he has failed to indicate how he would manage: (i) the

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limitation to two representation mandates funded under the Registry's single policy document on the Court's legal aid system, and (ii) his schedule to ensure his availability in the present case.

23. Finally, the Registry affirms that the legal representatives consulted have proposed solutions to address potential challenges resulting from the common legal representation, as identified in the Report.

C. Duty Counsel Observations

- 24. Duty Counsel submits that the Registry's submissions related to victims' participation, by reference to a part of the Registry 25 May 2022 Observations, exceed the scope of the 27 June 2022 Order and should thus be disregarded.
- 25. Furthermore, Duty Counsel argues that an assertion by the Registry concerning the representation of New Applicants, namely that those who were rejected in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case could be admitted in the present case in view of the different parameters of the cases, contradicts the Registry's prior position that the cases are so similar that there should be an automatic transfer of victims between the cases.

III. DETERMINATION BY THE CHAMBER

26. At the outset, the Chamber notes that the OPCV Observations and the OPCV Report were not filed on the instructions or with the leave of the Chamber under regulation 81(4)(c) of the Regulations of the Court. Thus, they do not need to be considered for the purposes of the present decision. In addition, the Chamber notes that the Duty Counsel Observations relate to the participation of victims from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case in the present proceedings. However, the Chamber recalls that this issue has been addressed in a previous order and, as a result, these observations also do not need to be addressed any further.²⁰

²⁰ Order in relation to the 'Application for recognition of the status of victims in the case of The Prosecutor v. Maxime Jeoffrey [sic] Eli Mokom Gawaka to the victims participating in the case of The Prosecutor v. Alfred Yekatom and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona', 16 February 2023, ICC-01/14-01/22-163 (a corrected version was filed on 17 February 2023, ICC-01/14-01/22-163-Corr) (the 'Order on the participation of *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* victims').

- 27. The Chamber recalls that, pursuant to article 68(3) of the Rome Statute and rule 90 of the Rules, it must guarantee the victims' right to present their views and concerns in a manner which is not inconsistent with or prejudicial to the rights of the Defence and that such views and concerns may be presented by legal representatives.
- 28. Contrary to the Warrant of Arrest issued in relation to Mr Mokom, the DCC does not include allegations of enlisting children under the age of 15 years. As a consequence, the applications of such persons fall outside the scope of the present case, subject to any amendment of the charges against Mr Mokom. Accordingly, the Chamber does not deem it necessary, at present, to divide any victims that may be admitted into groups and to appoint separate legal representatives, without prejudice to any future determination in this respect. The Chamber also considers that, based on the information received from the Registry, there is no need to organise the separate legal representation of other groups of victims that may be admitted.
- 29. Regarding the remaining victims, the Chamber observes that the allegations in the DCC largely overlap with part of the charges in the Yekatom and Ngaïssona case.²¹ Therefore, the Chamber is of the view that the Registry's assessment that a large number of victims from the Yekatom and Ngaïssona case as well as other victims is likely to apply to participate in the proceedings remains valid. Furthermore, the Chamber notes that it is expected that any admitted victims will rely on the financial assistance that may be provided by the Court. In this respect, the legal representation of victims by way of common legal representation in a case pursuant to the Court's Legal Aid Policy envisages a single counsel until the start of the confirmation of charges hearing, and one counsel plus one case manager following the commencement of the hearing. In other words, a team of common legal representatives, regardless of the number of lawyers such a team is composed of, has to share a budget allocated to a single counsel, including the investigation budget.²² In this context, the Chamber considers that the common legal representation of victims strikes an appropriate balance between the resources available to the Court and the duty to allow victims to participate meaningfully in the proceedings before the Chamber, hence ensuring the effectiveness

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²¹ See also Order on the participation of Yekatom and Ngaïssona victims, para. 26 and footnote 21.

²² Registry Report, para. 52.

of the proceedings.²³ Consequently, the Chamber considers that, as suggested by the Registry, it is appropriate to proceed by way of common legal representation pursuant to the aforementioned budgetary scheme.

- 30. The Chamber notes that, according to the Registry, the victims participating in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case wish to be represented by the same lawyers, while various New Applicants seek to have either certain LRVs from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case or other lawyers Mr Tendouli or Mr Kassongo appointed. The LRVs from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case, with the exception of Ms Massidda, expressed their willingness and ability to represent any admitted victims in the present proceedings, while Messrs Tendouli and Kassongo indicated that they are willing to join the team under the conditions set out above. This would lead to a team composed of six legal representatives for the victims.
- 31. Because of the overlapping features of the cases, the LRVs from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case are familiar with the present case, have an established relationship with the victims admitted in that case, and knowledge of the situation in the field in the CAR. These characteristics represent some of the key qualities the potential victims expect from their lawyers. In addition, the LRVs from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case represent a significant number of persons who have applied or may be expected to apply to participate as victims in the present case.
- 32. On the other hand, Messrs Tendouli and Kassongo lack the experience of the LRVs from the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case in representing victims from the CAR II Situation in proceedings before the Court, and a relatively limited number of applicants wish to have them appointed. Moreover, in view of the issues raised in relation to the internal structure of the team of five LRVs in the *Yekatom and Ngaïssona* case, adding additional members to such a team is not conducive to either the victims' interests or the efficiency of the present proceedings. These considerations outweigh the victims' right to choose a legal representative under rule 90(1) of the Rules.

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²³ See, e.g., Pre-Trial Chamber II, *The Prosecutor v. Alfred Yekatom and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona*, Decision on the Legal Representation of Victims, 23 May 2019, ICC-01/14-01/18-205, para. 13; Pre-Trial Chamber III, *The Prosecutor v. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo*, Fifth Decision on Victims Issues Concerning Common Legal Representation of Victims, 16 December 2008, ICC-01/05-01/08-322, public, para. 7; Pre-Trial Chamber I, *The Prosecutor v. Laurent Gbagbo*, Decision on Victims' Participation and Victims' Common Legal Representation at the Confirmation of Charges Hearing and in the Related Proceedings, 4 June 2012, ICC-02/11-01/11-138, public, paras 35-45.

- 33. Accordingly, the Chamber instructs the Registry to appoint Mr Dangabo Moussa, Ms Douzima, Mr Fall and Ms Rabesandratana as the legal representatives of any admitted victims in the present case, whereas it considers that it is not opportune to additionally appoint Messrs Tendouli and Kassongo. The mandate of the legal representatives shall take effect upon the issuance of the decision on applications for victim participation. The OPCV shall remain vested with its mandate to represent the collective interests of potential victims until such time.
- 34. However, so as to ensure that the persons seeking to have Ms Massidda and Messrs Tendouli and Kassongo appointed are offered an opportunity to nonetheless participate in the present proceedings, the Registry shall liaise with Ms Massidda, Mr Tendouli and Mr Kassongo with a view to consulting the relevant persons as to whether they wish to be represented by the team of common legal representatives appointed for the purposes of the present proceedings. In this regard, Mr Tendouli, who has inappropriately indicated that the persons seeking to have him appointed do not wish to participate in the present proceedings if he is not appointed as their legal representative, shall extend his full cooperation to the Registry. The Registry shall submit a report to this effect by no later than 31 May 2023.
- 35. Finally, while taking note of the issues regarding the efficient representation of victims' interests before the Court and the contact with victims raised in the Registry Report, the Chamber recalls that it is the duty of the Legal Representatives to ensure that any organisational matters allow them to effectively represent the interests of any admitted victims pursuant to their obligations under the Code of Professional Conduct for counsel. Noting that the team of legal representatives will be composed of fewer persons than initially anticipated as well as the legal representatives' proposals to address such potential challenges and the Registry's observations regarding these proposals, the Chamber does not deem it necessary to take 'measures for enhanced efficiency' of the organisation of the legal representatives or to implement the monitoring scheme proposed by the Registry at present.

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FOR THESE REASONS, THE CHAMBER HEREBY

INSTRUCTS the Registry to appoint Mr Dangabo Moussa, Ms Douzima, Mr Fall and Ms Rabesandratana as the common legal representatives for any admitted victims, which shall take effect upon the issuance of the decision on applications for victim participation;

ORDERS the Registry to liaise with Ms Massidda, Mr Tendouli and Mr Kassongo with a view to consulting the persons seeking to have them appointed as to whether they wish to be represented by the team of common legal representatives appointed for the purposes of the present proceedings, and to report on this matter by no later than 31 May 2023; and

ORDERS the Registry to reclassify the Addendum (ICC-01/14-01/22-176-Conf-Exp) as public.

Done in English. A French translation will follow. The English version remains authoritative.

Judge Rosario Salvatore Aitala

Presiding

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Judge Tomoko Akane

Judge Sergio Gerardo

Ugalde Godínez

Dated this Monday, 27 March 2023

At The Hague, The Netherlands

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