

Statement of the Acting Convenor of the Coalition for the ICC, Ms. Melinda Reed

**General Debate of the 18th Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the
International Criminal Court**

Tuesday 3 December 2019
The World Forum, The Hague

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to address you today as the acting Convenor of the Coalition for the ICC. In doing so, I follow in the footsteps of Bill Pace, who took his well-deserved retirement earlier this year.

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court represents over 2500 organizations from 150 countries. At this 18th Assembly session, we are some more than 900 activists representing 200 organizations from 55 countries. We are the world's largest civil society partnership advancing international justice. As civil society, we are the bridge between the court and the communities it interacts with. Together we amplify the voices of victims, the voices of survivors, the voices of communities.

We are human rights defenders, activists and allies. Some of our colleagues fear for their lives and the wellbeing of their family, their friends, their colleagues because of the work they do to stand up against injustice and fight impunity.

We carry the voices of the people for whom justice and accountability matter before, during and after the ICC becomes involved, and for whom convictions and acquittals are but a small part of the story.

This Coalition has, in our opinion, strengthened the Rome Statute System: we not only bring varied and skilled expertise from our members to the ASP but we also serve as a strategic platform to amplify voices that need to be heard to ensure that the ICC is effective, and independent, and that justice is visible, accessible, and felt in the countries where the Court works.

We also insist that justice before the ICC is fair, with scrupulous respect for defense rights, and we work to see justice for serious international crimes also delivered before national

courts. The Coalition and its members continue to appreciate the unique consultative status that it has with the Court and the Assembly of States Parties.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

As civil society, we continue to believe in the Court, and the Rome State system and what it stands for, perhaps now more than ever. We acknowledge the imperfections and evolving nature of current international justice efforts and seek solutions to make the system more fair, effective, independent, accessible and accountable.

We stand ready to engage with you and the Court, to share our vision, experience and expertise, and our institutional memory – some of us here this week have been working on these issues well before the Court was established, even well before the Rome Statute was negotiated.

We are critics as well. While critique can be uncomfortable to receive - as well as to give - we aim for a constructive and respectful dialogue, with the purpose to strengthen the many issues before you, including on the ICC's review, the court's budget, defense of the court's independence, strengthening state cooperation, elections, amendments, victim's participation and reparations, gender mainstreaming, the trust fund for victims, and other issues.

States parties have a critical responsibility to ensure the best leadership of the court and the Assembly, and we urge you to ensure the nomination and election of highly-qualified and independent candidates through fair, transparent, and merit-based nomination and election processes. This Assembly has before it a draft resolution on judicial elections which can greatly contribute to improving the elections process. We call on you to adopt the resolution without hesitation.

This Assembly, representing nearly two-thirds of the international community and of the international legal order – joined by Kiribati only a few days ago - should be a symbol of the potential of progressive multilateralism and the collective effort to end impunity for mass atrocities.

As we move through this week, let us recall the preamble to the Rome Statute: " all peoples are united by common bonds, their cultures pieced together in a shared heritage, [...] this delicate mosaic may be shattered at any time". This is the conscience that we share and the responsibility we took on.

We stand ready to continue to strengthen and support the Court and this Assembly so that it can be a force of progress and stay true to the preamble of the Rome Statute.

Thank you.