

**Statement of Ms. Margareta Cederfelt, MP (Sweden)
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The crucial role of international criminal justice in achieving SDG16

Wednesday, 17 July 2019, 1:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 1

Excellencies, Distinguishes Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Missions of Argentina, Ecuador, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Spain for allowing me to address you today on **The Crucial Role of international criminal justice in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16**.

My name is Margareta Cederfelt and I am a Member of Parliament from Sweden and the President of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA). PGA is the largest global network of more than 1,300 individual members of parliament in more than 130 parliaments around the world, who take collective, coordinated, and cohesive actions to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, democracy, human security, non-discrimination, and gender equality.

On international justice day, the international community commemorates the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Court (ICC) on 17 July 1998, as well as the activation of the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression since 17 July 2018. It is paramount to underline that we have a permanent Court capable of investigating and prosecuting individuals responsible for the commission of international crimes, namely genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.

In the past few days, I have participated in meetings on Sustainable Development Goal 16 at the margins of the PGA Executive Board meetings. I mention PGA's Board meetings because the Board is composed of 15 Members of Parliaments from all regions of the World, who are actively working in their own country to foster political will to strengthen the domestic legal order, increase the capacity of judicial actors, and oversee the actions of their governments to ensure that it is tackling pertinent priorities. Having interacted with my colleagues over the past days, I feel hopeful for the future.

HOPEFUL because many stakeholders including parliamentarians are taking concrete steps to further the implementation of SDG 16 in their respective countries, which inter alia aims to *promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice*

for all. Access to justice for all means **accountability**, which is as a prerequisite for peace and stability, development and effective protection of human rights. As we all know, there is no lasting peace without justice and no justice as long as there is impunity.

In this regard, the ICC is an essential tool to end cycles of impunity, violence, and atrocity.

However, despite having been a reality for more than two decades, the Court now faces some of the greatest existential threats in its history. Those who would preserve impunity for the most serious crimes that shock the conscience of humanity perpetuate misinformation and seek to evade the Court's jurisdiction. Now, more than ever, the ICC and the project of international criminal justice that it represents need champions.

The parliamentarians who comprise PGA's international network are at the forefront of the fight to ensure that international justice prevails, that victims' inalienable rights are respected in every corner of the globe, and that *all law-abiding nations join the Rome Statute system*. They recognize that in order for justice to prevail, States have to implement the crimes and principles under the Rome Statute in their domestic legal orders. In compliance with the principle of complementarity, cornerstone of the Rome Statute, Parliamentarians play a key role. Members of Parliament have passed legislation and called on their governments to uphold their country's international commitments, as well as the national ones while respecting the human rights of all.

I call on each State represented by many of you here today, as well as my parliamentary colleagues to *not only* make statement to promote justice and the Rule of Law *but also* to ACT to ensure justice is a reality for all and that domestic institutions and democratic governance are strong.

In a world deeply troubled, where in certain countries violence is the main language of governments and non-State actors, the international community has to gather its strength to support oppressed populations and ensure accountability for individuals who have committed international crimes. Without such efforts, there will be no peace and no justice and without peace and justice, there can be no sustainable development and inclusive societies.

On 11 April 2019, we welcomed the stepping down and arrest in Sudan of President Omar Al-Bashir, instigated by the civilian opposition who denounced the illegality and illegitimacy of the 2015 election of Mr. Bashir. Since then, the global PGA membership is continuing to demand that Sudan immediately surrenders to the ICC Mr. al- Bashir and all other individuals charged with genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes in Darfur, so that the course of justice for the victims of atrocities may finally take place. PGA has been the first international NGO to make such a strong call to the Transitional authorities of Sudan, while PGA also urged all parties in Sudan to embark in the restoration of democracy based on separation of powers under the Rule of Law, centered on institutional reforms to reinstate the checks and balances within a peaceful Sudanese State. But the impunity of Mr. Al-Bashir must be put to an end, as his regime has been fueling bloody armed conflicts within and outside Sudan, including in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, northern Uganda and South Sudan.

In this respect, our global membership welcomed the important Judgement of the ICC Appeals Chamber on 6 May 2019: **The Judges – including the President of the Court who is with us,**

today – unanimously recognized that sitting Heads of State do not have immunity from arrest when they travel to a State Party to the Rome Statute if there is a valid ICC Arrest Warrant against them for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or aggression. These are *the most serious crimes of concern to the International Community as a whole*, and there should be no legal obstacle to arrest and surrender the alleged perpetrators regardless of their rank or official position. **We are all equal before the law**, as affirmed in customary International Law since the Nuremberg Judgement of 1946.

International Justice Day provides us with an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of international justice. On this day, PGA members unite to put an end to crimes that threaten peace, security and the well-being of the world, and commit to utilizing their full legislative and political prerogatives in the fight against impunity, calling upon others to join them.

Since the last International Justice Day, legislators across Latin America have demonstrated their commitment through concrete action by ratifying the Kampala Amendments on the Crime of Aggression ([Paraguay](#) and [Ecuador](#)) and adopting legislation on cooperation with the Court ([Costa Rica](#) and the **Dominican Republic**). More than 200 parliamentarians from [the Americas](#), the [Asia-Pacific](#), [Africa](#) and [Europe](#) committed to Plans of Action toward ratification and domestic implementation of the Rome Statute, and cooperation with the ICC.

In some countries that may soon join the Rome Statute, including **Kiribati** in the Pacific and **Ukraine** in Eastern Europe, PGA Members are the forefront of the struggle for the universality of the Rome Statute system. In this respect, we call upon all States Parties to re-energize their efforts to bring about an increased Membership in the ICC system against impunity.

It is time for action and each one of us has a role to play.

Thank you.