

International cooperation to achieve international justice

Merci Madame la Presidente.

I will start by offering my condolences on behalf of the United Kingdom for the deaths of the two security guards at the Arusha branch of the Residual Mechanism.

Madame President, Thank you to the President, Judge Carmel Agius, and Prosecutor Brammertz for their briefings to the Security Council today.

I would like to reiterate the UK's unwavering commitment to the Mechanism and reaffirm our willingness to assist it wherever possible in fulfilling its mandate, as extended after 30 June, and implementing its vision of being a small, temporary and efficient structure. Most recently, in February this year, we were pleased with Lord Iain Bonomy's appointment to the roster of judges of the Mechanism.

Madame President, much has happened in this reporting period. Firstly, the recent report of the OIOS found that the Mechanism had successfully implemented most of the OIOS's previous recommendations, which has further improved working practices, and it has set two new recommendations, which we fully support, for the Mechanism to work towards. We are pleased that work has already started to implement these. Secondly, the Mechanism has ensured that its work has continued despite the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, and I would like to support the President's call not to lose sight of the importance of international justice during this period. Thirdly, with latest developments in the Kabuga case, the Mechanism has taken a huge step in showing that impunity is not allowed to prevail.

We congratulate the Office of the Prosecutor and the French authorities for the arrest last month of Félicien Kabuga in France. The UK is proud that it was among the states and entities that cooperated in the investigation leading to the arrest. As noted in the report, this arrest again demonstrates that international justice can succeed when it has the international community's support, even decades after the events. In this spirit, we welcome the preparations underway to establish an international investigative task force focusing on Rwandan genocide suspects present in Europe.

We welcome the progress made on the first major contempt case of Turinabo et al. The United Kingdom notes the work of the Prosecutor's office, assisted by the international community in confirming the death of the indicted Augustin Bizimana. Six fugitives now remain, and a number of cases require specific actions by certain states. It is disappointing that a lack of cooperation from some Member States has hindered the Prosecutor's efforts. We call on all Member States to assist the Mechanism; it is our collective responsibility to seek justice for victims and our obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to cooperate with the Mechanism.

The United Kingdom is among the States which are assisting the Mechanism with enforcing sentences and hopes that other States will also assist the mechanism as needed. We note the positive steps that the President has taken through the revised practice direction to ensure greater transparency and efficiency on conditional release. We are disappointed that no progress has been made on relocating the nine acquitted and released persons still in the safe-house in Arusha, despite efforts by the President and Registrar to resolve this untenable situation. We appeal to States which are in a position to do so, to help resolve this problem.

We are pleased with the Mechanism's progress in The Hague on the Mladić and Stanišić & Simatović cases, and note the Mechanism's efforts to minimise delays to these trials caused by COVID 19. We also commend the Mechanism for its work to build capacity with state prosecutors in the Western Balkans. However, despite some progress, we are disappointed that regional judicial cooperation still remains inadequate. It should not be possible to evade justice simply by residing in a neighbouring country. We call upon the countries of the Western Balkans region to ensure they honour the commitments they made when they signed the Joint Declaration on War Crimes at the 2018 London Western Balkans Summit and committed themselves to supporting, and removing impediments to, effective regional cooperation in the field of justice.

In relation to both the events in the Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia, it is deeply concerning that the glorification of war criminals continues on all sides, making reconciliation elusive. It is unacceptable that individuals and sections of society continue to deny what happened in Rwanda and in the Western Balkans, and the UK will continue to condemn instances of denial in its all forms.

Madame President, it is almost 25 years ago in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, that 8,000 men and boys were massacred, and over 20,000 women and children were forcibly deported. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I would like to pay tribute to all the victims of Srebrenica, who remain at the forefront of our thoughts. The ICTY, and now the Mechanism, have pursued justice for the victims and their families for the heinous acts committed against them. This, of course, would not be possible without the survivors and witnesses who have so bravely testified, and without whom there could be no justice. We must ensure that nothing like it ever happens again. It is vital that we all recognise the events at Srebrenica for what they were, a genocide.

There is still more work to be done by the Mechanism in relation to the awful events which took place in Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia, and States must continue to support it as it completes its work.

I thank you Madame President.