

Supporting international criminal justice

Thank you Mr President. I would like to thank the President of the International Residual Mechanism for International Tribunals, Judge Carmel Agius, and the Prosecutor, Mr Serge Brammertz, for their briefings to the Security Council today.

Mr President, at the outset, as this is the first meeting of the Council which Judge Agius has attended as President of the Mechanism, I would like to congratulate him formally on behalf of the United Kingdom on his appointment. We commend the priorities he has identified for his Presidency and welcome the opportunity to work constructively with him, just as we did with his predecessor, Judge Theodor Meron, whose significant contribution as President we recognise.

Today, as has been noted, we mark the Day of International Criminal Justice. Support for international criminal justice and international humanitarian law is a fundamental element of UK foreign policy. We believe that justice and accountability for the most serious crimes of international concern are crucial for building lasting peace and security and for ensuring protection of human rights for all.

In January 2018, the Residual Mechanism assumed fully its responsibilities for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), alongside its responsibilities for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Since then, the Mechanism has continued to achieve commendable progress in carrying out its mandate. It has delivered continuity in a wide range of functions including the trial of the most senior fugitives from justice, enforcement of sentences of those convicted – and in this respect, the UK was very pleased voluntarily to assist the Mechanism by enforcing one of these sentences- the protection of victims and the preservation of archives. In doing so, it has guaranteed the legacy of ICTY and the ICTR.

Yet, the Mechanism continues to operate under its revised and significantly reduced budget for the 2018 to 2019 biennium. As has been highlighted previously, this has led to reduced staff numbers and resources, and utility and service cuts. The Mechanism has been determined to continue to fulfil its mandate effectively and efficiently, however, and we are pleased that it continues to take the necessary steps to make this possible.

We would recall the introduction of the Mechanism's "Expenditure Reduction Plan" and "Downsizing Policy" both of which the Registry is continuing to develop and implement to ensure that the Mechanism remains on track to deliver its mandate in a fiscally responsible way in the face of budgetary constraints. However, we do need to remind ourselves of the breadth of the functions the Mechanism properly carries out. Along with its judicial functions, the importance of its other functions must be recognised, and we need therefore to be mindful of the need to balance cost-savings with

effectiveness.

The UK remains committed to supporting the Mechanism for the remainder of its mandate and calls on others to continue to provide the support the Mechanism needs, whether financially, logistically or politically.

Mr President, we are following the developments in the Arusha branch with interest, including the ongoing contempt case of Turinabo et al, as well as awaiting the outcome in the Ngirabatware review. We note that a number of Rwandan fugitives are still at large, and we call on all States to cooperate with the Prosecutor in his bid to have these fugitives transferred to the Mechanism. We also hope that States will assist with a solution to the problem of relocating the nine released and acquitted persons in Arusha.

Turning to The Hague, we welcome the outcome of the Karadzic appeal earlier this year. The increase in Karadzic's sentence for crimes, including genocide, from 40 years to life in prison, sends a powerful message that those who carry out such atrocities will be held accountable for their actions and will be sentenced accordingly. We also note the progress made in the Mladic and Stanisic and Simatovic cases and are pleased that these are due to conclude by the end of next year.

Mr President, while some progress has been made, the limited regional judicial co-operation between the countries of the former Yugoslavia still thwarts access to justice for many victims. The Mechanism can only completely fulfil its mandate and deliver justice to victims through the collective efforts of those countries. The Joint Declaration on War Crimes signed at Prime Ministerial level at the London Western Balkans Summit last year underlined the importance of supporting, and removing impediments to, effective regional cooperation, while strengthening cooperation with and seeking the assistance of the Residual Mechanism. We urge the countries concerned to work closely with each other and the Mechanism, in particular the Office of the Prosecutor, to ensure accountability through effective co-operation. The UK is proud to support that objective with projects in the region.

Mr President, lastly, but perhaps most importantly, April this year marked the 25th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide and next year will see the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. The anniversaries of these two devastating atrocities should lead us to reflect on the great contribution of the ICTY and the ICTR, and now the Mechanism, to ensuring that the perpetrators and instigators are held to account.

Whilst completing these trials will not bring back the thousands who were killed, nor erase the grief of their families, it sends a clear message that there will be no impunity for those who commit such crimes.

Twenty five years on, however, genocide denial for both atrocities continues. This is unconscionable and reprehensible. It is a direct threat to maintaining stability in both regions. We therefore hope that Council members and Member States will join the UK in supporting the Mechanism's measures to fight genocide ideology and its zero-tolerance approach to genocide denial in

all its forms.

I thank you, Mr President.