



**Kingdom of Belgium**

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Ambassador,  
Permanent Representative

To the United Nations Security Council

**Debate**

**International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals**

New York, 8 June 2020

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Madam President,

I thank Judge Carmel Agius and Prosecutor Serge Brammertz for their briefing.

I also present my deep condolences for the two Mechanism's staff members who passed away due to COVID-19.

Madam President,

May 16 will remain an important day for international criminal justice. After nearly 23 years as a fugitive, Félicien Kabuga, indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 2011 for genocide and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Rwanda in 1994, ended up being arrested by the French authorities. This is the result of the revised search strategy of the Office of the Prosecutor initiated a few years ago, but also of the assistance and support provided by INTERPOL, EUROPOL and the competent authorities of a dozen countries, including Belgium.

We congratulate the Prosecutor and his team, as well as all the States and organizations that have been involved, for what constitutes an essential step in the life of the Mechanism. The message to war criminals – wherever they are – could not be clearer. The international community will not tolerate impunity for the most serious crimes of international law. It will continue to do everything in its power to bring justice to the victims, and this even more than twenty years after crimes were perpetrated.

This success of the Mechanism gives us the opportunity to highlight all the better a principle which we believe is essential in the approach that this Council must continue to adopt in the field of justice. The prosecution of atrocity crimes perpetrators can only be effective if States cooperate not only among themselves, but also with international

courts and tribunals. This is why the Statute of the Mechanism and several Council resolutions established as a principle the obligation for all Member States to cooperate fully with the Mechanism.

In this respect, Belgium notes once again with concern that the Office of the Prosecutor has struggled to obtain the necessary cooperation from a number of relevant Member States in connection with the search and arrest of the last six fugitives indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. We strongly encourage these States to provide all necessary assistance and as a consequence participate in collective efforts for justice and accountability. I welcome the commitment just expressed by South Africa in that regard. In addition, greater cooperation from States is also necessary with regard to the resettlement of the nine acquitted or released persons currently residing in Arusha.

Madam President,

This year we commemorate the 25th anniversary of several tragic events which, like the Srebrenica genocide, marked the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. In this context, it is particularly regrettable to read once again in the Office of the Prosecutor's report that the denial of crimes and the glorification of war criminals remain more than ever a reality throughout the region of the former Yugoslavia. The same conclusion applies to regional judicial cooperation, which has been at its lowest level in years.

Belgium therefore calls upon the authorities of the relevant States to make it a priority to prosecute war criminals as well as to combat hate speech and any ideology advocating discrimination, this in accordance with the values and principles of both the United Nations and the European Union

I would like to conclude by welcoming the Mechanism's efforts to limit as much as possible the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its activities. Belgium also praises the efforts of the President of the Mechanism on the issue of early release which have led to the recent changes to the directive applicable in this area.

Madam President,

The role of the Mechanism in the process of reconciliation between communities, both in Rwanda and in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, remains more fundamental than ever. Belgium therefore reiterates its full support to the Mechanism and wishes the continuation of its mandate beyond 30 June.

Thank you.