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**Statement by
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Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Justice and Public Order
Of the Republic of Cyprus**

**First Assembly of the States Parties
To the Rome Statute
Of the International Criminal Court**

New York, 9 September 2002

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is indeed an honour to address, on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus, the First Assembly of the States parties to the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Cyprus has also aligned with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union, by the representative of Denmark.

The entry into force of this landmark instrument of international law and this very meeting, the First Assembly of the States parties, are events of historic significance for humankind. They signal the realisation of the lofty aspirations of the international community to put an end to impunity for those responsible – of whatever rank in society – for acts of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and by doing so to promote international peace and justice. We hope that the deliberations will also bring about the necessary breakthrough in defining the crime of aggression. The growing acceptance the Statute receives, is yet another manifestation of the shared belief that such crimes transcend borders and are direct attacks against all countries, religions and cultures and must be outlawed at the international level. I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the tireless efforts of the civil society and NGOs towards this end.

The Republic of Cyprus, being one of the earliest advocates of a permanent international criminal jurisdiction, was the 55th country to have ratified the Statute, and is honoured to have contributed actively to all deliberations leading to the establishment of the International Criminal Court as an instrument of deterrence and punishment of international crime in its various manifestations. We consider it imperative to ensure that the international system is based on respect of humanitarian values, a prerequisite for the prevalence of universal justice, peace and legality.

We sincerely hope that the establishment of the International Criminal Court will bring an end to a culture of impunity that has encouraged the perpetration of heinous crimes throughout human history. One can only wonder whether atrocities such as the ones the international community witnessed in Africa, in the Balkans, Southeast Asia and other parts of the world, would have taken place, had a permanent international criminal jurisdiction been in place and effectively functioning.

Mr. President,

As the Representative of a country which continues to be a victim of illegal military occupation, we attach utmost importance to the provisions of the Rome Statute. We underline in particular the fact that the jurisdiction of the court extends over war crimes and crimes against humanity, such as the forcible transfer of population {Article 7 1(b)}, the enforced disappearances of persons and the subsequent refusal to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons (Article 7,1(i)), and the transfer by the occupying power of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies {Article 8, 2(b) (viii)}, to name but a few.

I would like to reiterate our commitment and our readiness to continue contributing to the efforts aimed at turning the International Criminal Court into an effective and credible reality. It is within this context, that my Government has decided to present the candidature of Mr. Georghios M. Pikis, President of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Cyprus, for the post of a Judge of the Court at the elections to be held next year.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to express, once again, our willingness to work under your skillful leadership, with all the delegations present, in order to have a successful outcome of this First Assembly of the States parties.

Thank you, Mr. President.

