**39th Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Agenda point 2: Annual Report by the High Commissioner**

Intervention by Luxembourg on behalf of the Group of Friends of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Geneva

Mr. President,

Luxembourg has the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the International Criminal Court in Geneva.

We celebrate this year the 20th Anniversary of the historic adoption of the Rome Statute in 1998. This Commemoration is a unique opportunity to both highlight the valuable contribution of the International Criminal Court to the fight against impunity and to look ahead in order to deal with some of the challenges the Court faces.

Over the past two decades, the International Criminal Court has indeed played a pivotal role in prosecuting persons accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Court has brought considerable progress for the protection of victims, including in cases of sexual violence and in the use or the unlawful recruitment of children in armed conflict.

The fight against impunity is also at the heart of the work of the United Nations, along with human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The United Nations Human Rights Council plays an essential role in promoting these principles, which are also at the core of the ICC, as enshrined in the Rome Statute.

It is important to recall that the ICC is a court of last resort and that it is not meant to replace the national courts. Thus, the Group of Friends would like to highlight the importance of complementarity and cooperation between national jurisdictions and the ICC as essential for the strengthening of national justice systems and for combating impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole.

The Group of Friends attaches furthermore utmost importance to the invaluable contribution made by civil society in the establishment of the Court and since its creation to its functioning.

The Group of Friends welcomes the activation, this 17th July, of the ICC’s jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, which thereby completes the work of the Rome and Kampala conferences of 1998 and 2010.

As the Group of Friends confirmed in a Joint Statement before this Council in March 2017, we are deeply convinced that the lack of accountability encourages repetition of crimes, as perpetrators and violators feel free, if not emboldened, to commit further offences without the fear of punishment. The ICC contributes, in a decisive manner, to the protection of human rights and to the prevention of such crimes. Hence, we should continue to work together in order to promote further awareness of the ICC and the Rome Statute in every region of the world.

We need the Rome Statute and the ICC as much as we did 20 years ago and maybe even more! The Group of Friends therefore calls upon all States to cooperate with the ICC and calls upon those States that have not yet done so, to ratify the Rome Statute.

Thank you, Mr President.