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STATEMENT TO THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES' PLENARY DISCUSSION ON COOPERATION

Amnesty International strongly supports this important discussion on cooperation with the International Criminal Court (Court) and appreciates the opportunity to make a brief statement.

As the Bureau's Report on cooperation notes, there exists a "wide scope of pertinent subjects to address in the area of cooperation." It is therefore important that the Assembly establishes a long-term approach to promoting cooperation and prioritizes key issues that it will seek to address each year in consultation with the Court and other actors.

For 2013, Amnesty International urges the Assembly to prioritize addressing the lack of states who have entered into agreements with the Court to relocate victims and witnesses who are at serious risk because of their involvement with the Court's work.

No relocation agreements have been signed in 2011 or 2012. This is despite the existence of a fund for relocations which allows for agreements and/or arrangements to be entered into on a cost-neutral basis.

The Court describes "an alarming shortfall in its ability to protect victims and witnesses potentially under threat." Court officials explained in a side event yesterday that many victims and witnesses who require relocation can only be provided with temporary measures often for long periods of time, which puts their lives on hold and places them under significant stress. This situation is unacceptable.

All states parties have an obligation under Article 86 and Article 93 (1) (j) of the Rome Statute to cooperate with the protection of victims and witnesses. In addition, Rule 16(4) foresees the need for states to enter into relocation agreements.

States parties should put in place effective systems for relocations and enter into agreements with the Court.

Amnesty International calls on the Assembly to commit to taking immediate action, in coordination with the Court, to increase the number of agreements in 2013. This should include placing the issue at the top of agenda of inter-sessional discussions on cooperation; organizing awareness raising, technical and information sharing forums; and otherwise supporting the Court's efforts.

Thank you.