



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**STATEMENT
BY**

**MARVIN IKONDERE
LEGAL ADVISOR
PERMANENT MISSION OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
AGENDA ITEM
UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION**

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[Please check against delivery]

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to **deliver this statement** on behalf of the African Group.

The African Group associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We thank the Secretary-General for this year's report on this agenda item A/78/130. In line with General Assembly resolution A/77/111, we look forwards to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General *“to the Assembly at its seventy-ninth session reviewing all the submissions of Member States and relevant observers, as well as views expressed in the debates of the Sixth Committee, since the sixty-second session of the Assembly and identifying possible convergences and divergences on the definition, scope and application of universal jurisdiction for the consideration of the Committee”*.

I have the honour to reiterate the great importance the African Group, attaches to this agenda Item entitled “The Scope and Application of the Principle of Universal Jurisdiction”. As you may recall, the abuse in the resort to universal jurisdiction, particularly in relations to African officials, caused the African Group to request in February 2009 the inclusion of an additional item on the abuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction on the agenda of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly.

It would be recalled, as stated in a memorandum annexed to the request for the inclusion of universal jurisdiction on the agenda of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, that “The principle of universal jurisdiction is well established in international law”, that “The African Union respects this principle, which is enshrined in article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act” of the AU, but that it was concerned about the uncertain scope and application of the principle and the abuse of it.

As a result of the aforementioned request, this item was included in the agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly in 2009, at the request of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of

the African Group and was allocated to the Sixth Committee. At the 25th meeting, on 12 November 2009, the representative of Rwanda, on behalf of the Bureau, introduced a draft resolution entitled “The scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction” A/C.6/64/L.18. Universal jurisdiction has since been a subject of challenging discussions in the Sixth Committee.

Mr. Chair,

Debates on this topic have been long and intense, however no significant steps have been reached in addressing the “misuse” and “abuse” of the universality principle, which should be of concern for all Member States of the United Nations, including the African Member States. The real concerns which led to the inscription of the item on the Agenda of our Committee still remain to be resolved, hence the scope of universal jurisdiction remains uncertain.

We welcome the adoption of General Assembly resolution A/76/111, §, in particular operative paragraph 3, which “-Invites the working group of the Sixth Committee, to be established at its seventy-ninth session, to consider and comment on the question ‘on the relevant elements of a working concept of universal jurisdiction’.” We look forward to a further constructive debate on the question, as part of the process for the Sixth Committee to make progress on the topic.

The African Group reiterates its concern “regarding the applicability of the principle of universal jurisdiction does not pertain to what is being done collectively through multilateral processes or the global community but rather to the indictments by individual judges in non- African States, which focus [...on sitting] Heads of State and Government, Foreign Ministers and Other Senior Officials] who are entitled to immunity under international law” as noted in the African Union Commission’s comments and observations in A/66/93.

Africa through the Member States and the African Union Commission have engaged constructively and has been cooperative, including by submitting information and observations on applicable international treaties, national legal rules and judicial practices made by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Chair,

As evident in the adoption of resolution A/72/120, where in the preambular part the General Assembly noted “*the constructive dialogue in the Sixth Committee, [...] recognizing the diversity of views expressed by States, including concerns expressed in relation to the abuse or misuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction*”, Member States can make progress and agree on how to address the germane issues of “misuse” and “abuse”. A significant first step will be for the Sixth Committee to include language reflecting the diversity of views expressed by States in the Sixth Committee, as well as in the context of its working group, including concerns, expressed in relation to the abuse or misuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction as an operative paragraph.

The Sixth Committee can and must take steps to address the inclination of non-African States to apply the principle of Universal Jurisdiction on Africans outside of the multilateral processes without the consent of African States, and outside the safeguards of cooperation within the international system. We have evidence of the use of the universality principle in Africa with the consent and cooperation of the concerned African States, and in line with the commitment of African States to end impunity for atrocity crimes. Consent and cooperation when regulated within the multilateral system can limit the “abuse” and “misuse” of universal jurisdiction.

Furthermore, universal jurisdiction shall be complementary to national jurisdiction of the country concerned, and shall not be applied in a manner inconsistent with the principles of international law or customary international law, including sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of states, sovereign immunity and diplomatic immunity.

In conclusion, Universal jurisdiction should be exercised in good faith and with due regard to other principles of international law, in order to avoid its misuse and abuse. In this context, agreed norms **must** be established regarding the scope and application of Universal Jurisdiction.

I thank you for your kind attention.

