

1 International Criminal Court
2 Trial Chamber II
3 Situation: Republic of Uganda
4 In the case of The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen – ICC-02/04-01/15
5 Presiding Judge María del Socorro Flores Liera, Judge Kimberly Prost and Judge
6 Nicolas Guillou
7 Status Conference – Courtroom 1
8 Thursday, 30 April 2026
9 (The hearing starts in open session at 9.32 a.m.)
10 THE COURT USHER: [9:32:22] All rise.
11 The International Criminal Court is now in session.
12 Please be seated.
13 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [9:32:44] Good morning, everyone.
14 Court officer, please call the case.
15 THE COURT OFFICER: [9:32:49] Good morning, Madam President. Good
16 morning, your Honours.
17 This is the situation in the Republic of Uganda, in the case of The Prosecutor versus
18 Dominic Ongwen, case reference ICC-02/04-01/15.
19 And for the record, we are in open session.
20 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [9:33:07] Thank you very much.
21 Good morning, again. I would like to welcome everyone inside the courtroom and
22 public gallery as well as those outside the courtroom.
23 I ask the participants to introduce themselves, beginning with the Victims
24 Participation and Reparations Section. Kindly proceed, please.
25 MR AMBACH: [9:33:29] Good morning, your Honour. For the VPRS, today we are

1 here, my colleague Eun Sung Yang, and myself, Philipp Ambach. Thank you.

2 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [9:33:42] Thank you very much.

3 Now, I would like to call upon the Trust Fund for Victims to introduce themselves.

4 MS ECKELMANS: [9:33:53] Good morning, Madam President, your Honours.

5 Representing the Trust Fund for Victims today, this morning, Veena Suresh, Maria

6 Emilia Gelmi, Maouloud Al Ansary and Ailsa Gillespie, and myself, legal adviser,

7 Franziska Eckelmans.

8 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [9:34:15] Thank you.

9 Now, the Public Information and Outreach Section, please.

10 MR HELLMAN: [9:34:27] Good morning, Madam President, your Honours.

11 Matias Hellman for the Public Information and Outreach Section.

12 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [9:34:27] Thank you. I'm sorry.

13 I now ask the Office of Public Counsel for Victims to introduce themselves.

14 MS BEDOUCHA: [9:34:42] Thank you, Madam President, your Honours.

15 Representing the OPCV today are Orchlon Narantsetseg, Tars van Litsenborgh and

16 myself, Adeline Bedoucha.

17 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [9:34:43] Thank you very much. Before

18 beginning, I would like to remind everyone that our colleagues in the interpretation

19 booth need us to speak slowly and that they need us to pause for at least five seconds

20 before speaking.

21 Now, the main purpose of this status conference called by the Chamber is to consider

22 the issue of a potential extension of time for the VPRS to continue the administrative

23 eligibility process as requested by the Registry on 30 October 2025, an issue that the

24 Chamber considers extremely important.

25 In its Reparations Order of 28 February 2024, Trial Chamber IX instructed the

1 Registry, through the VPRS, to complete the administrative eligibility process of
2 victims, including outreach, identification, and eligibility assessment within two years,
3 specifically by 2 March 2026. On 30 October 2025, the VPRS requested an extension
4 of time, and in order to gather all relevant information, the Chamber suspended the
5 time limit in its order of 19 December 2025.

6 The Chamber observes that progress relating to the administrative eligibility process
7 appears to have been limited thus far. According to the table submitted by the
8 Registry in paragraph 6 of its additional submissions of 2 February 2026, the VPRS
9 had identified 8,300 victims, completed the assessment of 4,400 of them, and notified
10 12 of these victims, while the estimate is a total of 49,772 victims.

11 The Chamber notes that to work on this backlog, the Registry proposes a timeline for
12 the processes of identification, assessment and notification that runs in parallel for 2.7,
13 4.5 and 6.5 years respectively. Notwithstanding the submissions and proposals from
14 the Registry, the Chamber would appreciate having more clarity on this timeline and
15 the reasons for such deviations within the timelines.

16 The Chamber is aware of the challenges ahead, but also mindful of the rights of the
17 victims who have been waiting for reparations to be implemented for many years.

18 In this hearing, the Chamber hopes to explore further options to increase efficiency.

19 Noting that the initial deadline that Trial Chamber IX set for this process has already
20 lapsed, the Chamber is of the view that adding 6.5 years to the time frame would
21 have a severe impact on the reparations process for these victims. Therefore, the
22 Chamber would like to explore feasible measures to shorten the timeline proposed by
23 the Registry and reduce the number of years to be devoted to the administrative
24 eligibility process. It intends to establish a realistic and concrete time frame.

25 The Chamber will now hear any additional submissions from the VPRS, the Trust

1 Fund for Victims, the OPCV and PIOS. In this context, the Chamber notes that in the
2 order of 2 April 2026, it included a set of questions that it finds important for any
3 decision on the issue. The Chamber expects the participants to make submissions on
4 them and/or on any issue considered relevant.

5 I would remind everyone that this status conference is focused on receiving new and
6 practical information and input on modalities, as well as time frames, for the
7 Chamber to take into account relating to the request which is before it. The Chamber
8 will give each participant 10 to 15 minutes to make its presentation. The Chamber
9 notes that we may ask questions as necessary.

10 I now give the floor to the Registry.

11 MR AMBACH: [9:39:40] Thank you very much, your Honour.

12 And thank you again for the opportunity during this status conference to continue
13 this highly productive dialogue with the Chamber that the Chamber has been
14 entertaining since our VPRS request for an extension of time of 30 October of last
15 year.

16 In the interests of time, I shall now address the specific questions that were put to the
17 VPRS in the 2 April order and I shall first go to the progress since our 2 February 2026
18 filing and further process optimisations that we have engaged in.

19 So, for the past three months since that order, the VPRS has been able to operate
20 broadly at the monthly identification and legal assessment capacity that was projected.

21 What is important to mention here is the projected improvements that we had
22 foreseen have actually become reality and have therefore materialised, which was an
23 important factor for us to achieve from the February perspective, and this has now
24 been achieved.

25 More importantly, though, we have been able to engage, or at least plan, further

1 optimisations of the victim identification process which have an impact on our
2 monthly processing capacity and the projected completion time line, particularly for
3 the identification of beneficiaries in the field and the legal assessment of the forms.
4 First, the VPRS has implemented an automation tool between its electronic form
5 collection platform in the field and the central victim database at headquarters, VAMS.
6 This led to the process acceleration we had envisaged and reported on in February, so
7 this has now become a reality. The VPRS has also secured an alternative victim data
8 collection tool which better conforms with the ICC's migration to a higher IT
9 independence from certain providers and regions.
10 This tool is also used by the Trust Fund for Victims for their own purposes. I,
11 therefore, expect synergies in terms of the ease of data transfer from the VPRS to the
12 Trust Fund, as well as for the notification of victims of the positive notifications of
13 their eligibility. I'll briefly touch upon that later.
14 I cannot at present accurately quantify the efficiency and, thus, time gains from the
15 use of the same information management service tool between VPRS and the Trust
16 Fund, but it is certain that, in particular, the common victim data management and
17 the victim notification process will be greatly assisted, and there will be a lesser
18 margin of error in the handling of data.
19 Second, we have recently altered the focus of our field clerks and intermediaries, both
20 in terms of geography and specific harm following feedback we've been receiving on
21 the whereabouts of relevant victim groups. The shift of focus has led to higher
22 numbers of victim applications collected per clerk per day in the field.
23 Also going forward, the number of incoming victim applications will depend on how
24 quickly we can deploy and redeploy relevant resources in different geographic areas
25 and how much ground they will be able to cover in their activities. In this effort, we

1 will continue to focus also on thematic crimes victims who are, we've now learned,
2 much more difficult to identify than the victims of the attacks of the camps.

3 I wish to highlight two important points here.

4 First, even a minor resource boost of the section will have a considerable impact if the
5 amount of clerks can be increased in the field, as they are effectively the arms and legs
6 of the Registry on the ground.

7 Second, a comprehensive and well-administered victim identification capacity is also
8 key to prevent harm to victims and abuse. We are in close cooperation on this with
9 colleagues from the Trust Fund, PIOS, but also the OPCV and the other team of Legal
10 Representatives of Victims during the judicial proceedings phase.

11 I'm saying this because process disruptions in the field can have an immediate
12 decelerating effect and we need to, therefore, put a particular focus on our capacity in
13 the field. This obviously extends to efficient, repeated, and hands-on training of staff,
14 but in particular intermediaries and clerks, on the objectives and the tools used to
15 collect the victim data, in particular the electronic tools that I mentioned earlier on,
16 which is the next point of process optimisation I just want to quickly touch upon.

17 A major accelerator for the VPRS information collection since the summer of 2025 has
18 been our so-called household victim application form enabling groups of victims with
19 similar harm to come forward through one single form.

20 We've already mentioned this in the previous filings, so I'm not going to go into this
21 now. However, we notice that during the initial phase of this process the percentage
22 of the newly collected applications requiring follow-up for completeness was at a
23 very high percentage -- 40 per cent. This has improved over the last month, we've
24 been able to improve the initial intake quality, but it is a major factor that has
25 negatively impacted, and risks to negatively impact, the processing speed because it

1 obviously entails a back and forth between individual victims, or regarding
2 individual victim forms, and our clerks in the field.

3 One of the root causes of the problem is, obviously, insufficient training of clerks and
4 intermediaries, which is why we have put particular emphasis on further training so
5 that we can further increase the quality of the initial intakes and the follow-up
6 completion efforts can be minimised. I expect a redoubling on training to have
7 tangible effects on the overall speed of the process. Still, as this exercise is presently
8 ongoing, I cannot put a specific number in terms of time gain to it as we speak.

9 Another measure to reduce the error margin in filling out application forms is a
10 simplification of the form itself. We have collected user experience data in the past
11 months and identified questions that created confusion for clerks, or victims, in the
12 completion of these forms. Fixes of the application form, which we are
13 administering now, will clarify the form and increase our chance of capturing
14 relevant information in a single intake.

15 Now I'm coming to the figures, the realistic and concrete time frame that you
16 indicated, Madam President. What I mentioned earlier on already fed into our
17 February filing, and it likewise feeds into my submission to you today.

18 First, for the identification of the victims yet to be reached, I believe that it is a realistic
19 assumption that we will achieve an average of close to 1,300 individuals per month,
20 leading us to a completion date in approximately two years and three months from
21 now. This is pretty much in accordance with what we already reported in February
22 of this year.

23 Actual victim data intake numbers of individuals may actually be higher, but I'm also
24 factoring in that we will, at times, slow down our intake due to geographic and
25 thematic focus realignments for field clerks. So we see a slight improvement here,

1 but in broad strokes it is what we've reported in February.

2 Second, as regards the legal assessment of victim forms, the present projection has
3 improved by some months from our 2 February estimation to just over four years in
4 total. The reason for this is, major expected accelerations such as our IT
5 improvements and quality increases of collected forms, which will have an effect on
6 the assessment speed, which by and large happens here at headquarters.

7 Third, as regards the notification, I find it difficult to provide an absolute completion
8 figure after a close analysis of the situation. For the newly identified reparation
9 beneficiaries, the notification of victims will likely follow months after the assessment
10 has been finalised, since the victims will be comparatively easy to reach we will have
11 fairly recent contact data.

12 Yet, for many of the victims who participated at trial, the Registry and the Trust Fund
13 for Victims have found it very difficult at times to reach out to victims for notification.
14 This may be due to outdated victim contact data in the relevant forms or the fact that
15 we only would have an intermediary's contact data in the form, so we would first get
16 to an intermediary and would then through that intermediary have to find the victims.
17 This oftentimes took a lot of time, if it was successful at all.

18 In light of this, the VPRS proposes that the Chamber consider as the end point of the
19 administrative eligibility process the conclusion of the legal assessments -- i.e., the
20 four years that I indicated earlier on -- and not the successful notification of victims.

21 I'm suggesting this with the consideration in mind that also during the reparation
22 implementation phase by the Trust Fund, which will naturally outlast the application
23 assessment deadline, notification attempts can continue for victims that have not been
24 found yet. And, again, for newly identified victims, the successful notification some
25 months after the legal assessment would be the norm.

1 I now come to acceleration suggestions in light of the situation on the ground.

2 I make reference to your order in this respect. I would have to make two points on
3 this topic.

4 First, and specific to the well-established cooperation with the Ugandan authorities
5 mentioned by the Chamber, we would welcome the continuation of efforts to issue all
6 citizens with national ID cards. The issuance of these cards also to communities in
7 the rural and less accessible areas will be extremely helpful for the VPRS and the
8 Trust Fund's efforts to facilitate victim applications and have assurance on their
9 identity at the implementation stage.

10 Second, and more specific to the stability of the security situation and the access, in
11 particular, colleagues from the Public Information and Outreach Section have to all
12 areas across northern Uganda, I think that our cooperation could be further enhanced.
13 More concretely, I envisage that we could invest more coordinated efforts, also in
14 consultation with colleagues from the Trust Fund, in covering localities where victim
15 applicants reside. PIOS colleagues could deploy first with information campaigns to
16 communities of the Ongwen process, and the announcement that VPRS
17 representatives would follow shortly thereafter to assist victims in completing their
18 applications for reparations, thus leading to a more comprehensive information
19 collection. Our cooperation to date is already very effective, but I believe that we
20 may be able to further maximise the impact of joint activities in light of the long way
21 still to go.

22 This also goes for our joint efforts, again also with colleagues from the Trust Fund, of
23 a feedback mechanism to ensure the integrity of the process and to flag any
24 irregularities. Discussions on this are already ongoing.

25 Lastly, I come to the further suggestions for improvements that the Chamber has

1 requested submissions on. Here I have three points to mention.

2 First, we are in discussions with colleagues from the Trust Fund to which extent the
3 individualised collection of victim data can be further reduced where the Trust Fund
4 does not require such information. The matter is presently being explored between
5 us and tested against data that VPRS has gathered in the field and that has led to its
6 assessment of the need for the form, and yet I see a potential of process acceleration
7 here.

8 Second, I would like to submit that the current regime of the VPRS-led victim
9 notification, followed by a second contact by Trust Fund members to the future
10 beneficiary a month later, would seem somewhat redundant to me. VPRS, therefore,
11 suggests that it may be more fruitful to make a notification of eligible victims a joint
12 effort, maximising, therefore, the scarce resources in the field of both offices. The
13 notification would, thus, be carried out through just one communication to the victim,
14 following the script that the Trust Fund colleagues have established in the present
15 exercise and in a timing that best conforms to its workflows. This joint effort will be
16 helped by the fact that the VPRS and the Trust Fund will operate with the same
17 information management service tool, making the task distribution and monitoring
18 most effective.

19 I underline that discussions on this with the Trust Fund have only just commenced.

20 Finally, we continue to explore further process automation options through IT tools
21 from data collection in the field up to the transfer to Trust Fund colleagues. For this
22 we've also involved colleagues from IMSS and we are trying to find further options
23 here. Discussions are ongoing.

24 With this, I shall leave it for now. Thank you very much.

25 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [9:56:06] Thank you very much, Mr Ambach,

1 for your very concrete submissions. Now I ask the Chamber whether they have any
2 additional questions. No? Okay. Thank you very much.

3 I will now give the floor to the Trust Fund for Victims.

4 MS ECKELMANS: [9:56:34] Madam President, your Honours, the Trust Fund for
5 Victims is grateful for the opportunity to address the Chamber on how to further
6 optimise the eligibility process in this case. I will focus in these observations on the
7 questions raised by the Trial Chamber in its order scheduling today's status
8 conference and remain at the disposal of the Chamber for any additional questions.

9 I would like to start with the issue raised by the Chamber's third question; namely,
10 whether the timeline for eligibility affects the implementation of the reparations
11 programme.

12 Your Honours, the TFV underlines at the outset that the eligibility process and the
13 implementation process are linked and partially interdependent but, with respect to
14 timelines, markedly distinct and necessarily overlapping in this case. This
15 distinction is not incidental. It was built into the design of the Reparations Order
16 itself. From the start, separate timelines existed. The Chamber set a deadline for
17 the Registry by not imposing a corresponding timeline completion for the
18 implementation of the TFV's reparations programme due to the precondition of
19 availability of a large sum of money. If this was a smaller case, yes, delay in finding
20 victims would delay delivery of reparations. But we have before us a massive-scale
21 case.

22 So, in response to the Chamber's third question, the TFV's position is that as long as
23 there is a substantial number of victims deemed eligible as soon as possible, the
24 additional time given to VPRS to identify additional people does not negatively affect
25 the impact, the efficiency of reparations.

1 In the TFV's view, the rate at which VPRS has since January of this year notified
2 victims of their eligibility, and the projections of victims to be deemed eligible in the
3 coming months, will be sufficient to start implementing programmes as soon as
4 possible.

5 As in other programmes and in compliance with the principle of promptness, the TFV
6 has therefore planned to proceed incrementally, beginning with those victims already
7 notified as being in dire need and adapting the programme as further victims are
8 identified, found eligible, notified, and their contact data transmitted to the TFV.

9 Returning to the relationship between the two distinct processes, the dependence is
10 actually more linked to the quality of the eligibility process, rather than the speed.

11 For the TFV, it is essential that the eligibility process is of high quality and integrity.

12 The credibility of the Court and the TFV, and ultimately the willingness of states and
13 private donors to contribute, depends on the assurance that those who receive
14 reparations are indeed victims of the crimes for which the person has been convicted,
15 and only those victims.

16 This is particularly challenging in circumstances where no reliable documentation
17 exists and where knowledge of who the victims are largely resides within the affected
18 communities themselves, thus creating opportunities and risks of not identifying the
19 right victims. The risk is present in any programme, but the larger the victim
20 population, the larger the risk and the greater the financial impact of wrong
21 identifications.

22 In that respect, and by addressing the first question, the TFV has engaged closely with
23 VPRS over the past years and will continue to do so to integrate a process that is both
24 efficient, but also of quality. Thus, both TFV and VPRS agreed when filing their
25 observations in January -- our observations in January -- to continue reflecting jointly

1 in a systematic manner on how the eligibility process can be improved, building on
2 lessons learned from previous cases. These discussions are ongoing and require
3 time, as we both are demanded to ensure day-to-day operations across many
4 situations and cases, setting up new systems while also stocktaking on lessons and
5 integrating changes.

6 The TFV is confident that our joint engagement will lead to further efficiencies,
7 whether along the lines already proposed or through other approaches. The two
8 proposals, or the several proposals mentioned today by our colleague from VPRS at
9 the end of his address, are among those that VPRS and TFV have started to discuss
10 only very recently. In that respect, allow me to comment on the specific suggestion
11 from VPRS to make the notification process more efficient.

12 As we know, when VPRS notifies both eligible and ineligible victims, the
13 administrative eligibility process is concluded, enabling the structured transfer of
14 information to the TFV, allowing it to maintain from then on contact with victims
15 throughout the implementation process. Notification to victims in the Ongwen case
16 began at the end of January with an initial group of nearly 600 victims in dire need.
17 The TFV has not yet had the opportunity to assess in detail, together with VPRS, how
18 these first weeks of notification and the TFV's subsequent contact with victims have
19 functioned in practice. This remains at a very early stage. For that reason the TFV
20 considers it too early to draw conclusions on how this process might be further
21 refined.

22 Your Honours, the TFV considers that one of the most significant, as also referred to
23 by our colleague, developments at this stage is the move towards a proper and,
24 ideally, shared information and data management system. Both VPRS and TFV,
25 including through exchanges with external experts, have underlined and understood

1 that a common database is a necessary starting point for any further innovation.

2 Once fully operational, this system is expected to significantly improve the exchange,
3 consistency and usability of data both during eligibility and, later, during
4 implementation and monitoring.

5 It will facilitate the cooperation of the TFV with implementing partners and to reduce
6 the need for additional time and resources to be put in the implementation
7 process -- so there are efficiencies for the question 4 that you have raised.

8 In that sense, this is already a major innovation responding to the Chamber's
9 questions. This innovation will also create efficiencies at implementation stage.

10 Your Honours, the TFV would also underline that it is not only important to identify
11 the right victims, but also to reach as many eligible victims as possible. The victims
12 concerned are often highly vulnerable and may not come forward easily.

13 In the TFV experience, thereby drawing on the Chamber's question 1, it is often
14 necessary for the most vulnerable and stigmatised victims to see that a programme is
15 actually underway and that persons in a similar situation benefit from it, to trust the
16 programme and to come forward. For that reason, timeliness for an administrative
17 process may need a degree of flexibility. Where timelines are too rigid, there is a risk
18 that victims are excluded for formal reasons, which may create tensions within
19 affected communities and ultimately affect confidence in the programme and in the
20 Court. This is, therefore, another area where eligibility and implementation are
21 linked.

22 In addition, even where timelines are set, there may be a need for a residual phase
23 allowing victims who were not previously reached or could not come forward due to
24 exceptional circumstances to, nevertheless, access the process.

25 Your Honours, turning briefly to implementation, addressing also your fourth

1 question, again.

2 Preparation of the programme in the Ongwen case is well underway. The TFV will
3 continue providing updates to the Chamber and the victim population as well as the
4 general public through the regular reporting. As of today, the preconditions for
5 starting a programme start being in place. In June 2024, the board called for
6 voluntary contributions of €5 million. In 2025, the TFV received the first earmarked
7 contribution to fund the Ongwen programme from Finland at a value of €100,000. In
8 2025, as well, the board allocated a total of €900,000 to this case. In addition, the
9 OPCV20 campaign, initiated with the endorsement of the TFV board of directors in
10 2025, generated €80,000 in contributions from private donors, specifically for the TFV
11 in unprecedented development for the TFV. A considerable part of these funds had
12 been earmarked for the Ongwen case.

13 The TFV would like to underline that this demonstrates tangible support for
14 reparative justice. Other efforts of fund mobilisation are ongoing. Political support
15 is growing, but the global financial situation will dictate the pace at which the funds
16 will be collected.

17 In parallel to fund mobilisation, the TFV has taken action to respond to the needs of a
18 victim-centred approach. The TFV has learned that reparations only have a
19 meaningful effect if the victims themselves experience the process as responsive and
20 meaningful. This has been mirrored in the approved DIP.

21 Your Honours, I might exceed the time limit; I need another one and a half minutes to
22 conclude. Thank you.

23 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:09:03] Yes, go ahead, please.

24 MS ECKELMANS: [10:09:07] Throughout 2025, the TFV has facilitated the
25 establishment of participatory committees in the four case locations, as well as an

1 additional committee for former child soldiers and victims of sexual and
2 gender-based violence. These committees are now in place since March, April 2025.
3 They will allow a two-channelled way of communication between the Court and the
4 victims on the ground.

5 This means with a vast degree of resource certainty now achieved, the TFV is in a
6 position to move from planning to concrete operational steps, with the participatory
7 mechanism providing a platform for continued engagement and refinement of the
8 programme.

9 In concluding, the TFV is grateful for the explanations provided today by VPRS and
10 the estimations provided. Given the eligibility process is a distinct process, the TFV
11 will not address the concrete length of the estimated timeline. But the TFV would
12 respectfully submit that any timeline should remain sufficiently flexible to ensure that
13 all victims, particularly the most vulnerable, can be included. Timelines are
14 important as they require well-functioning administrative processes to be in place;
15 however, they should not come at the cost of quality and integrity, given that the
16 outcome of the eligibility process may have a long-term implication on the Court and
17 its reparative justice system.

18 To conclude, the Trust Fund for Victims respectfully conveys its confidence that
19 reparations can now move forward from planning into implementation while
20 eligibility work continues in parallel.

21 Thank you, your Honours.

22 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:11:08] Thank you very much,
23 Ms Eckelmans, for your submissions.

24 And now I turn to my colleagues, if they want to pose any questions.

25 Judge Prost, please.

1 PRESIDING JUDGE PROST: [10:11:20] Thank you very much. And thank you,
2 Ms Eckelmans, for those very helpful submissions.
3 I just want to try and clarify one point, and it relates to this issue, since the Chamber's
4 obviously looking for any areas where there's duplication. I wanted to ask a bit
5 more about this notification by the VPRS, followed by what you described as a first
6 contact and Mr Ambach referred to as a notification from the Trust Fund. So,
7 I understand the point of notification from VPRS. There's been a process and the
8 victims have to be told the outcome of the process.

9 So I would like to understand better when you're talking about this first contact from
10 the Trust Fund. Obviously, the Trust Fund has to then start the implementation
11 process with the victims and would be contacting them in due course, but this first
12 contact, is it a second notification that the Trust Fund is doing, or does it serve the
13 purpose of actually then commencing by providing additional information? I'd just
14 like to understand better what that involves from the Trust Fund.

15 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:12:34] Thank you. Before returning,
16 I would like to ask Judge Guillou whether he has any questions and then you can
17 respond to both.

18 JUDGE GUILLOU: [10:12:45] Thank you, Madam President. No, just to follow up
19 on this, basically, issue of notification. If we were to streamline the proceedings, we
20 would probably have either one of the two of you doing this notification. And I just
21 want some clarification on who do you see as benefit for that. Would it be VPRS and
22 then there is no, sort of, first contact/notification, depending on the answer to Judge
23 Prost's question, or would it be only the TFV, in which case it would save some time
24 for VPRS that would lead to the possibility to accelerate the identification process?
25 And I'm especially interested in the second option because we're looking at

1 shortening the identification timetable. So if there is a common IT system, which
2 I think is a great progress, then instead of having VPRS having the burden of filing
3 this notification, wouldn't it be, I mean, more efficient to have than the Trust Fund
4 immediately being responsible for this step?

5 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:13:52] Thank you very much.

6 Ms Eckelmans, please.

7 MS ECKELMANS: [10:14:02] Thank you so much for your questions on the
8 notification.

9 So, I think in our submissions we made clear that this is a proposal that was made just
10 very recently and we will now need time to consider it, and we are at the very early
11 stages of the notification and the first contact process.

12 I think from a history perspective, the notification concludes, in our understanding,
13 the eligibility process that is within the full responsibility of VPRS. VPRS is
14 identifying the victims and concludes the process also with negative determinations,
15 informing the victims accordingly, this process with this notification to the victims.

16 So there is a right element involved in this process, and that is also why OPCV is here
17 because they have that task of supporting those who were found to be ineligible in a
18 review process. So we're in an administrative eligibility process that is fully and
19 entirely in the hands of the VPRS and not of the TFV. In that sense, the notification
20 is the last step of that process. Whether that needs to be part of the timeline is a
21 different question in that sense.

22 From the perspective of the TFV, we are just now undergoing the process of finding
23 the issues arising between also VPRS's notification and our first contact. It seems
24 that some of the issues are repeating themselves, but we still have to analyse it. So
25 our colleague from VPRS said we have intermediaries that we have to deal with.

1 Indeed they come back to us, so we don't get the full contact of that individual victim,
2 but we again get the number of an intermediary. Yes, so there are issues we need to
3 resolve, we need to address together, because the purpose of this first contact for the
4 TFV is to be able throughout the implementation - and we know the implementation
5 will take a long time for some of the victims who are not in dire need, who don't fall
6 within the prioritisation categories - to keep this database to establish the contact to
7 make sure the victims call the TFV on the ground and say, "We are changing our
8 phone number. We are now moving to another location." Because it will take some
9 years until the Trust Fund will be able to raise €52.4 million and provide €750 euro to
10 each of the victims.

11 So that is where, from the TFV's perspective, we are creating this database and need
12 this very reliable information that comes from VPRS to the Trust Fund. Whether
13 there is a need for a 30-day timeline, that's another issue. We, in our thinking, we
14 thought we will address the Chamber once we know better how the process is going,
15 whether there is a need to extend that timeline or have more time to reach out to the
16 victims.

17 In that sense, as this was a very concrete question, we see the notification as part of
18 the VPRS duty to complete the administrative eligibility process and enable the Trust
19 Fund, then, to have the ability to reach out to these victims. Finding victims,
20 contacting victims has always been an issue in the areas where we are working. We
21 have seen that in the Lubanga and in the Ntaganda situation as well. Victims who
22 have been long on the record, often represented by the legal representatives, we have
23 not yet been able to find some of them in the Lubanga case. And we have invested a
24 lot of time and resources to find these victims.

25 And in that sense, as the VPRS is the one determining their eligibility, they will know

1 that these victims exist because they are the ones actually making the eligibility
2 determinations, and for the TFV, therefore, we can rely on this information and focus
3 our resources and our efforts on programme delivery.

4 Thank you.

5 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:19:08] Thank you very much.

6 Any follow-up?

7 PRESIDING JUDGE PROST: [10:19:11] No.

8 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:19:13] Yes. Yes, both my -- Judge Prost,
9 please go ahead first.

10 PRESIDING JUDGE PROST: [10:19:19] Perhaps Judge Guillou first, because I was
11 simply going to say I would like, if possible, to hear from VPRS on this exchange,
12 since there's been relevant points raised. Is that the -- was that the same,
13 Judge Guillou?

14 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:19:26] Judge Guillou, please.

15 JUDGE GUILLOU: [10:19:31] No, I would also like to hear VPRS, but I don't
16 especially understand why giving the role of notifying to the TFV would change
17 anything in basically the identification of the victims. Notification is an
18 administrative process. I think if VPRS basically gets the information in the database
19 and then the TFV does notification, I mean, I don't see how -- what it deprives for the
20 TFV. I think the issue of basically finding the people is different. If it's in a
21 database, then it's just basically streamlining the proceedings, finding some
22 inefficiencies and having only one body doing the notification.

23 I mean, so maybe there is something that I didn't understand, but I am not convinced
24 that there is any specific reason to have one notification from the Registry, followed
25 by another first contact by the TFV. I think it even makes it complicated for the

1 victims to understand.

2 And the second thing is that I think you have a very pertinent argument for
3 the -- from the Trust Fund, Ms Eckelmans, is that when there is a notification that is
4 negative, and this to me, for this it would totally make sense that it is VPRS because
5 then it has no reason to reach the Trust Fund. So wouldn't it be possible to have an
6 agreement in which the VPRS would be in charge of notifying negatively to the
7 applicants, but then if it is positive from the VPRS, there is something that is
8 automatic in the common IT system and without any notification, the TFV then takes
9 the hand? And then we have some productivity gains which leads up to some
10 months of basically progress for the victims, which I think is also relevant because we
11 hear a lot from the victims that reparation comes too late. So that's what we want to
12 address.

13 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:21:32] Thank you, Judge Guillou.

14 Then I would like to give the floor to Mr Ambach to give any reactions to the
15 discussions just held.

16 MR AMBACH: [10:21:44] Thank you very much, your Honours.

17 Maybe to start with the last point raised by Judge Guillou. The negative assessments
18 are with the VPRS, and I think this makes, exactly for the reasons that you already
19 mentioned, perfect sense. VPRS is, so to speak, the end-point, also in terms of the
20 interlocutor for the relevant victim, and from there a potential appeal could obviously
21 then go into the direction of OPCV as ordered by the Chamber.

22 For the positive assessment, my thinking is also that the future interlocutor of that
23 victim will be the Trust Fund/the implementing partner, no longer the Registry, so
24 this goes to the item of potential confusion that Judge Guillou also mentioned.

25 The notification is obviously a factor that takes time on our end, objectively speaking.

1 The resources that we have on the ground that have to carry out their activities are
2 obviously blocked when they have to do the notifications from other tasks that would
3 go through the identification. That is a simple numeric exercise.

4 And finally, I recall that in the 2024 Reparations Order, the administrative eligibility
5 process as described by the Chamber did not yet contain this element of notification,
6 so this is an element that has come into the discussion afterwards. And I think that
7 the most sensible way of how to deal with it from a resource pooling or resource
8 allocation perspective is, I think, the most sensible. This is what we have engaged in
9 with the Trust Fund and part of our logic.

10 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:24:02] Thank you very much.

11 Ms Eckelmans, you want to say something or we can move ahead?

12 MS ECKELMANS: [10:24:11] Thank you.

13 So, I would like to just say in response to our colleague in VPRS that the notification
14 was part of the design from the very beginning. So it was very clear that in the
15 Ongwen order - not in the Ntaganda order - that the VPRS would notify, and then the
16 Chamber -- the TFV would be able, within 30 days, to contact the victims and explain
17 what will happen, explain the process, explain what is there at this very moment and
18 that there will be a long process. We have these victims' committees in place in
19 order to communicate these messages, communicate about the time that is necessary
20 for the reparations. So there is a lot of understanding in the communities from our
21 perspective, so in that sense, reacting to your suggestion. I would also like to
22 underline that notification has only happened as of January. That is only since that
23 time it is possible for the Trust Fund to actually, in principle, start implementation.
24 I think it is for this notification process, we have two categories of victims. We have
25 the categories of victims who were not identified by VPRS. That's a more difficult

1 category of victim because VPRS inherits the identification process from the Legal
2 Representatives. So -- and then there are the victims where VPRS is identifying
3 themselves. They are contacting these victims. They have now household forms,
4 so there is a need that they contact each of these victims.

5 From the perspective of the TFV, it is very important that VPRS first, themselves, sees
6 how their systems work, and they see how the system works when, in the end, they
7 notify the victim, they see that the victim exists, is alive. We have now quite a
8 number of cases of deceased victims, still for first contact, while they were just
9 notified. So we would like to see that this process works, and then the TFV is ready
10 to discuss how this can be improved, especially for the victims identified by the
11 VPRS.

12 In that sense, we would really like to very respectfully suggest that this issue will be
13 rediscussed at a point when we know more about how the notification, how
14 successful the notification is in this concrete case. Thank you very much.

15 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:27:32] Thank you very much for your
16 submissions. It has been very useful for the Chamber to hear these exchanges
17 because it will help us in our deliberations. In the meantime, I encourage really to
18 continue these discussions that just started, because I want to reiterate that the aim of
19 this process is to reduce as much as possible the time, taking into account all the
20 factors that you have indicated. But I thank you very much for the submissions.
21 And if there are no questions from my colleagues, then I give the floor now to the
22 Office of Public Counsel for Victims. Please.

23 MS BEDOUCHA: [10:28:23] Thank you, Madam President, your Honours. The
24 office will be making brief remarks on the observations heard from our colleagues in
25 the Registry and in the Trust Fund.

1 Before that, however, we wish to inform the Chamber that in the last months, victims
2 have expressed concerns in relation to, on the one hand, the eligibility process in
3 general and, on the other hand, what would appear to be a restrictive reading of the
4 Reparations Order concerning thematic crimes. We have raised those concerns with
5 our colleagues in the VPRS. We are confident that we can jointly find solutions to
6 that, but we simply wanted to apprise you because we might end up seizing you if
7 certain matters remain unresolved.

8 Now turning to the matter of this hearing, as you know, the Reparations Order was
9 issued on 28 February 2024. Two years and two months after, not only the
10 implementation has not started, but we are facing serious delays in the identification
11 of potential beneficiaries. As anyone in this courtroom can easily imagine, the
12 passing of time aggravates the suffering of victims. Many of them have died, many
13 of them continue to die as we speak, with no prospect of receiving reparations and
14 with the sole hope that perhaps their relative might receive reparations for the harm
15 they suffered.

16 We have listened to the submissions of our colleagues in the Registry and in the Trust
17 Fund, and we acknowledge the operational challenges. Yet, those concerns cannot
18 eclipse the central issue before this Chamber. It is the victims' right, not
19 administrative convenience, that must guide the Court's approach. Victims
20 participation in the process of justice, their access to meaningful reparations are the
21 very purpose why this institution exists.

22 In December 2025, 21 months after the Reparations Order was issued, only
23 five per cent of the estimated total number of beneficiaries had been identified. An
24 even smaller portion had been notified of the outcome of their dossiers. Today, the
25 situation has barely evolved. We acknowledge the efforts undertaken to improve

1 efficiency, and streamline and speed up the process.

2 Concerning the issues of notification, at this juncture I would like to make a couple of
3 observations.

4 The first one is that on our hand, concerning participating victims, we have shared
5 updated contact details.

6 Concerning the body in charge of the notification, we will certainly not oppose if an
7 agreement is found and is approved by the Trial Chamber. However, we caution
8 against adopting a system in which victims would be approached for the purpose of
9 identification - that is, recounting their traumatic story - at a point in time very distant
10 from the moment they are notified of the outcome of their dossiers.

11 The pace of progress has remained significantly slower than anticipated. Progress
12 has been exceptionally slow, far slower than what the victims were entitled to expect
13 and far slower than what the collective nature of the reparations award should have
14 made possible. The challenges faced are neither new nor unforeseen. They have
15 been evident from the outset. As the Chamber itself underlined in its order
16 convening this hearing, the situation in the Republic of Uganda has remained
17 relatively stable. Our own regular contact with victims confirm this assessment. In
18 Northern Uganda, and in particular in the locations where the reparations awarded
19 are to be implemented, the situation is stable and victims' communities are relatively
20 easily accessible. This has been further facilitated by the recent activities in the Kony
21 case with the deployment of the Public Information and Outreach Section.

22 Your Honours, we wish to underline one central point. The reparations awarded in
23 this case are collective in nature. As we explain in our submissions of
24 November 2025, this choice has practical consequences. There is no need for
25 individualised or complex eligibility assessments. This is crucial. The eligibility

1 process in case of a collective award can be and should be simplified. Unlike
2 individual awards, the identification of beneficiaries for collective reparations is not
3 constrained by rigid procedural rules. The Court's framework allows, and indeed
4 expects, a flexible pragmatic and efficient approach. In our view, this flexibility has
5 not been fully utilised yet.

6 Strengthening identification mechanisms on the ground and ensuring that focal
7 points are properly trained to filter and refer only those who meet the criteria would
8 significantly reduce the number of files requiring further review. We understand
9 that certain improvements have taken place in that regard, but we believe this should
10 continue at a picked-up pace.

11 This is not a marginal or optional improvement. It is essential if the process is to
12 move forward at a pace consistent with the rights of victims and with the purposes of
13 these reparations' proceedings.

14 Turning to the requested extension.

15 Victims have expressed clear and consistent opposition to a lengthy delay. For them,
16 time is not neutral. Delay has real concrete consequences. Every additional day
17 without reparations deepen the harm they continue to endure, erodes their trust in
18 the process, and undermines the very purpose of this phase; namely, to restore their
19 dignity. For these reasons, while victims accept that an extension of time is
20 necessary, said extension cannot be open-ended or excessive.

21 In our submission of November 2025 we indicated that a maximum of one-year
22 extension was justified in the circumstances. Four months have already passed.

23 We, therefore, reiterate that 12 months is the absolute maximum permissible.

24 Anything beyond that would be incompatible with the rights and legitimate
25 expectations of the victims; and, in any event, the extension ultimately granted should

1 be the final one.

2 As recently ordered by this Chamber in the Ntaganda case, victims respectfully
3 request that any extension granted run from the initial deadline for completion of the
4 eligibility process, that is 2 March 2026.

5 Also, as in the Ntaganda case, victims request the Chamber to order that should any
6 potential beneficiary present themselves after the 12-month deadline for the proactive
7 identification process, their application be assessed on a case-by-case basis until
8 completion of the overall assessment and notification process. This safeguard is
9 essential to ensure that no eligible victim is excluded solely due to circumstances
10 beyond their control.

11 Finally, we submit that any extension should be closely monitored, and we request to
12 be periodically informed of developments so that progress can be meaningfully
13 assessed and any emerging concerns can be addressed in real time.

14 Taken together, these measures setting a firm outer limit for the extension, ensuring
15 that it runs from the 2 March 2026 deadline, providing for a case-by-case assessment
16 of any late-presenting potential beneficiary, and maintaining regular oversight, taken
17 together these measures will safeguard the rights and expectations of the victims.

18 They are reasonable, they are consistent with the Chamber's approach in the
19 Ntaganda case, and they are necessary to ensure that this phase moves forward with
20 the urgency and seriousness it demands. Thank you.

21 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:37:54] Thank you very much,

22 Ms Bedoucha. Please be reassured that the Chamber is very mindful of the rights of
23 the victims, and that is one of the reasons we are convening this status conference.

24 I would like to ask my colleagues whether they have any questions for -- no? Okay.

25 Thank you, thank you very much.

1 And now I would like to give the floor to the Public Information and Outreach
2 Section.

3 MR HELLMAN: [10:38:30] Madam President, your Honours, thank you for giving
4 the Registry's Public Information and Outreach Section the opportunity to participate
5 in this hearing.

6 In compliance with the Reparations Order and the instructions contained therein,
7 PIOS has over the last two years designed and conducted a far-reaching information
8 campaign following extensive consultations with the VPRS, the Trust Fund, and
9 others. This has allowed us to devise tailored messages and approaches with
10 responsiveness to victims' information needs. Since the issuance of the Reparations
11 Order, PIOS staff based in Uganda have conducted hundreds of face-to-face meetings
12 in numerous locations across Northern Uganda, engaging in two-way communication
13 with the affected communities, community leaders and stakeholders.

14 Mass media is another important component of the information campaign. Tens of
15 hours of programming have been broadcast on community radios and our staff have
16 participated in more than 50 live radio programmes. The messages conveyed by the
17 PIOS team in Uganda are continuously and closely coordinated with the VPRS and
18 the Trust Fund.

19 Information travels also in the opposite direction. Through a feedback mechanism
20 we consistently communicate concerns and views expressed by community members
21 and stakeholders back to the VPRS and the Trust Fund without delay.

22 Your Honours, PIOS is fully committed to continuing intensive information and
23 outreach activities in Uganda for the foreseeable future. And we are keen to explore
24 ways to further enhance and fine-tune the already excellent cooperation and
25 coordination we have with the other entities present with a view to maximally

1 supporting the administrative eligibility process and accelerating it where possible.
2 In concrete terms, coordination could be enhanced, for instance, by increasing the
3 frequency of joint planning sessions between PIOS, VPRS and the Trust Fund. We
4 are also prepared to work even more closely together on fine-tuning our public
5 messages to maximise the clarity and the relevance of the information disseminated to
6 the affected communities concerning the administrative eligibility process and the
7 reparations process as a whole.
8 PIOS could also explore broader use of mass communication platforms, such as radio
9 as a way to disseminate information effectively to large groups of people at once.
10 As regards the proposal expressed by the VPRS for enhanced coordination, when it
11 comes to the timing of reaching out to specific communities in various locations, such
12 as close sequencing, we welcome this and PIOS will gladly engage in further
13 discussions with the VPRS directly in order to identify the most optimal way possible
14 to maximise the impact of our activities.
15 Madam President, your Honours, finally, based on PIOS interaction with the affected
16 communities, I can report that the initial two-year timeline for the identification of
17 beneficiaries as per the Reparations Order has caused significant anxiety and concern
18 in the affected communities, a sense of urgency to be registered and worries about
19 people being left out.
20 Going forward, PIOS would obviously welcome the opportunity to be able to
21 communicate new information with revised timelines that would give reassurance to
22 communities that eligible individuals will not be left out because of factors outside
23 their control. This would be important for the sake of maintaining trust in the
24 reparation process.
25 Thank you for your attention, your Honours.

1 PRESIDING JUDGE FLORES LIERA: [10:42:44] Thank you very much, Mr Hellman,
2 for your submissions.
3 Are there any questions from the Chamber.
4 No? No? Thank you very much.
5 To the parties or participants who would like to raise any other issue. No? If that is
6 not the case, I think we have come to the end of this status conference. It has been
7 very useful to hear the views of all of you and we are very encouraged for the work
8 that you are doing together. We really encourage to continue that because we can
9 see there are several measures that can be taken.
10 Now, I think we have all the elements the Chamber needs at this stage to deliberate
11 and to order, and to issue a decision on the matter in due course.
12 I would like to thank all the participants, our court officer, our court clerk, the
13 security officers, the AV team, as well as the interpreters and court reporters.
14 Court is hereby adjourned.
15 Thank you. Have a very good day.
16 THE COURT USHER: [10:43:47] All rise.
17 (The hearing ends in open session at 10.43 a.m.)