

PRESS RELEASE

Finally, the International Criminal Court

Paris, 9 April, 2002

In two days, the last ratifications necessary for the entry into force of the International Criminal Court (ICC) will be deposited at the United Nations headquarters. According to its Statute, the ICC will become a reality on 1st July, and the first cases will probably arise one year later.

In Rome on 17th July 1998, 124 States signed the ICC Statute: according to article 126, 60 ratifications were necessary for its entry into force. Numerous States such as China, Russia and the United States deny any association with this Court, however it is in New York, symbolically, on the territory of the State most openly opposed to its creation, that the ICC finally sees daylight.

The FIDH, active since its creation for the instigation of an effective and independent International Criminal Court, has also been involved in Rome and post Rome negotiations, in particular within the steering committee of the International Coalition for the ICC which now gathers more than a thousand non governmental organisations. The 11th April will thus represent a historic day in the struggle for justice.

"This event constitutes an important step for victims and for all human rights defenders who have brought their constant support to this project during all the negotiation process for the ICC" said Sidiki Kaba, President of the FIDH. For the first time within an international court, victims of the most serious crimes will have access to and will benefit from a right to remedy.

It is important to recall, however, that the Court's jurisdiction is limited. First, its jurisdiction is not retroactive. Second, only crimes committed on the territory of or by a national from a State party fall within the jurisdiction of the Court. Furthermore, the administration of justice often clashes with a culture of impunity. After the long fight for the creation of the ICC, time has come now to fight for its effective implementation.

The FIDH and all the human rights defenders' organisations it represents remain committed and call on all the States to commit themselves for the fight against impunity by ratifying the treaty and adapting their national legislation in accordance with the Statute.

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17, passage de la main d'or - 75011 Paris France
E. MAIL : fidh@fidh.org / site INTERNET : <http://www.fidh.org>