

Cairo, 30th January 2008

The Arab Coalition for the International Criminal Court urges the African summit to consider ICC membership

The Arab Coalition for the International Criminal Court addresses Their Excellencies the Heads of African States meeting in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa for the 10th ordinary Summit of the African Union States and governments, to be held from 31st January – 2nd February 2008.

The Arab Coalition requests that the Chairman of the current session and the head of the African Union commission take into consideration the following:

- Current conditions in African States, and the current climate, which have given rise to a number of political and international issues which pose a serious threat to the future of the African continent and its peoples. This is in addition to what the region has endured in the past, what has taken place on its lands and what is currently happening on it.
- Of all the world's regions, the African continent is most in need of the presence of a permanent international criminal court which will act as a deterrent to criminals who commit genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity – the majority of which crimes have been, and are being, committed against African peoples.

It is for these reasons that the Arab Coalition suggests that the issue of ratification of the Rome Statute and membership of the permanent International Criminal Court be raised with the African delegations participating in the 10th ordinary session of the Summit of the Heads and Governments of the African Union. The Arab Coalition urges governments of African States to ensure that their citizens do not miss the opportunity to take part in this international mechanism which strives towards the firm establishment of international criminal justice, and whose presence cannot be denied or ignored.

The Arab Coalition calls on the delegations taking part in this Summit to exert efforts with the Sudanese government in order to put an end to the ongoing serious violations against civilians in Darfour. They must urge the Sudanese government to work towards protecting civilians in accordance with Sudan's international and regional treaty obligations - in particular its United Nations obligations – and urge it to respect and implement Security Council resolution 1593, issued in 2005. Sudan must be urged both to hand over those suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfour to the ICC and to cooperate effectively with the Court and its organs, in particular the ICC Prosecutor.

The Arab Coalition believes that justice is a fundamental requirement to stop the ongoing and continuous human rights violations in Darfour. For this reason, the Arab Coalition believes that the Sudanese government must arrest the two men accused of crimes by the ICC, Sudanese minister Ahmed Haroun and Janjaweed leader Ali Koshayb. This is of fundamental importance because as long as the accused men remain free they will continue to represent a grave and continued danger to civilian victims in Darfour.

Only 29 of 53 African States have ratified the ICC's Rome Statute. The remaining States have declined to ratify or accede to the ICC despite the fact that of all the world's regions, the African continent is most in need of a permanent international criminal court.