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## **Global Coalition Urges Azerbaijan to Accede to the International Criminal Court Treaty Azerbaijan's Accession Would Provide Important Support for the Court in the CIS Region**

**(New York, 4 April 2006)** – In a letter sent today to the President of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev the Prime Minister of Azerbaijan H.E. Artur Tahir oğlu Rasizadə the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) – an international network of more than 2,000 non-governmental and civil society organizations – called on Azerbaijan to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to demonstrate its full commitment to international justice and the global fight against impunity. As the CICC letter noted, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is currently among the most underrepresented in the ICC system, and to date only two states in the region – Georgia and Tajikistan – have joined the Court.

In writing to Mr. Rasizadə and Mr. Aliyev, the Coalition welcomed recent expressions of interest on part of the Azeri Ministry of Justice in exploring ICC accession. Most notably, the Justice Ministry has been in contact with the coordinator of the South Caucasus Coalition for the ICC, the Georgia-based International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), requesting that a conference on the ICC be convened in Baku. Following on this request, the ICCN and the CICC have organized a conference entitled “The International Criminal Court: Southern Caucasus Perspectives” which will take place on April 5-6 in Baku.

Commenting on the Azeri movement around the ICC issue, CICC Program Officer for Southern and Eastern Europe Maria Cavarretta said, “A growing number of civil society organizations in the South Caucasus have joined the Regional Coalition for the ICC in order to urge the government of Azerbaijan to promptly accede to the Rome Statute as a way of showing its full commitment to fight against impunity in the region and beyond.”

Over the past several years, Azerbaijan has made some encouraging steps towards possible ICC accession including the inclusion of provisions on crimes against humanity and war crimes from the Rome Statute into the new Azeri Criminal Code that entered into force on 1 September 2000.

Expressing hopes that Azerbaijan will speed up its accession to the ICC treaty, CICC Convenor William Pace said, “Given the important role that Azerbaijan plays in the CIS region, we believe that Azeri accession to the Court could motivate other countries across the region to support this new and vital institution and could offer a serious boost to the growing world momentum to ensure accountability for the worst violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law. Azerbaijan's entry into the Court could also help the CIS region gain a stronger voice within the Court.”

At the end of October 2005, Mexico's ratification of the ICC treaty brought the total number of ICC States Parties to an historic 100. Each month, CICC members select a country on which to focus ICC ratification and accession efforts. Some recent examples of ICC ratification and accession successes include Kenya's ratification of the ICC treaty just three months after the CICC's January 2005 ratification campaign on Kenya and the Dominican Republic's May 2005 ratification following the CICC's December 2004 campaign on the Dominican Republic. Since Azerbaijan did not sign the Rome Statute of the ICC before the deadline for signatures of 31 January 2000, the country is now being called on by the CICC to sign up to the ICC through accession, a process of signing and ratifying in one step which is allowed for with international treaties.

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**Notes for Editors:**

1. The ICCN-CICC conference "The International Criminal Court: Southern Caucus Perspectives" will take place on April 5-6 in Baku at the Absheron Hotel-16th Floor. Journalists are welcome to attend. For details or to arrange a media interview, please contact Elkhon Mekhtiev from Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution at 00994503716870.

2. The International Criminal Court is the world's first permanent global criminal court. It is *not* an organ of the UN but rather an independent body established in The Hague, the Netherlands on 1 July 2002 when the ICC treaty came into force. The ICC does not have jurisdiction over crimes prior to that date.

3. The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) is *not* an organ of the Court but rather an independent NGO network of more than 2,000 civil society organizations working to promote a fair, effective and independent ICC. The CICC was established in February 1995 and has offices in New York City and The Hague as well as seven regional offices around the world.

4. The Court is currently investigating cases in Darfur, Sudan; the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and Uganda. The ICC unsealed its first arrest warrants for five top leaders of the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) on 13 October 2005. On 17 March 2006, the ICC unsealed its arrest warrant for Thomas Lubanga Dyila, leader of the political and military movement, the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) and also announced that Mr. Lubanga had been arrested and transferred to the Hague. Mr. Lubanga is alleged to have been involved in forcefully enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 and using them to participate actively in hostilities in the DRC