



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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Côte d'Ivoire Ratifies the Rome Statute, Joining the International Criminal Court

Set to Become 122nd State Party and 33rd African Member of the Court

New York, USA –Côte d'Ivoire today deposited its instrument of ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), making it set to become the Court's 122nd state party.

"By ratifying the Rome Statute, the government of Côte d'Ivoire has taken a courageous step towards ending impunity and bringing peace and justice for all Ivoirians", said Francis Dako, Africa Regional coordinator for the Coalition for the ICC. "I encourage the government to proceed quickly with the ratification of the Court's Agreement on Privileges and Immunities as well as implement the Rome Statute into domestic law".

Côte d'Ivoire's ratification of the Rome Statute comes almost 15 years after the state initially signed the treaty on 30 November 1998. A number of legal and constitutional hurdles delayed the process. Côte d'Ivoire's Constitutional Court had initially ruled in October 2003 that the Rome Statute ratification was not in conformity with the Ivorian constitution of 2000. This implied that the treaty could only be ratified by Côte d'Ivoire if the constitution in force was amended to address the incompatibilities. Due to the advocacy efforts of civil society organizations, the evolving political situation, and the work of supportive members of Parliament, the required amendment and a bill approving the government's ratification of the Rome Statute were approved by Parliament on 20 December 2012 and subsequently signed into law by President

Alassane Ouattara.

Civil society nationally and internationally advocated for many years that Côte d'Ivoire ratifies the Rome Statute. NGOs conducted trainings, liaised with the media, published information and materials, held academic conferences and advocated with parliamentarians and organized events. The ratification will be a welcome step forward.

Reacting to the ratification, Ali Ouattara, president of the Ivorian Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CI-CPI) welcomed this major development.

"We are pleased that the Ivorian government took this major step," declared Mr. Ouattara. "The ratification of the Rome Statute, which established the ICC, is an important instrument for the fight against impunity and demonstrates the will of the Ivorian authorities to make Côte d'Ivoire a state of law where justice is the same for all," he added. "Only justice can provide a lasting peace and a successful reconciliation. "In becoming a state party, Côte d'Ivoire should meet its commitments by cooperating with the ICC for both issued and upcoming mandates."

In April 2003, after the violence resulting from the disputed presidential and legislative elections, Côte d'Ivoire accepted the jurisdiction of the ICC under the provisions of Article 12(3) of the Rome Statute. A preliminary examination was carried out from 2003 until June 2011, when then-prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo requested that Côte d'Ivoire be made an investigation that included the violence resulting from the disputed presidential election in 2010 as well. President Ouattara issued letters of support for the ICC's investigation and jurisdiction in these matters in both 2010 and 2011. Two arrest warrants have so far been issued for crimes against humanity for Laurent Gbagbo and Simone Gbagbo. The confirmation of Laurent Gbagbo's charges is currently set for 19 February 2013, and he remains detained in The Hague. Simone Gbagbo is awaiting domestic charges in Côte d'Ivoire, including genocide. She is the first woman to be issued an arrest warrant by the ICC, and the Court has requested her immediate transfer to The Hague.

Background: *The ICC is the world's first permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Central to the Court's mandate is the principle of complementarity, which holds that the Court will only intervene if national legal systems are unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. There are currently eight investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; Côte d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; Libya; and Mali. The ICC has publicly issued 20 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. The Court issued a judgment in its first trial on 14 March 2012. Two other trials are ongoing. The ICC's Office of the Prosecutor has also made public that it is conducting seven preliminary examinations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea and Nigeria.*

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent International Criminal Court and improved access to justice for victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. For more information, visit: www.coalitionfortheicc.org.

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