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Benin: Adopt ICC law to prosecute grave crimes at home*President Boni can build on fight against impunity in West Africa*

Benin's president should immediately send a bill on the domestic prosecution of grave international crimes to parliament for consideration, the Coalition for the International Criminal Court said today.

The West African country is the July 2015 focus of the Coalition's Campaign for Global Justice, which encourages states to join the International Criminal Court (ICC) and implement the Rome Statute, its founding, treaty into national law.

Benin has demonstrated its support for the ICC since its creation. It was the 49th state to ratify the Rome Statute on 22 January 2002, and the Code of Criminal Procedure was amended in 2013 to allow for cooperation with the Court. However, the adoption of a bill fully implementing ICC crimes into national legislation has been pending in the president's office since 11 September 2006.

In a letter this week to President Yayi Boni, the Coalition urged Benin to take the necessary steps to adopt national legislation on ICC crimes and help end impunity.

"President Yayi Boni has an opportunity to play a crucial role in improving the efficiency of the Rome Statute by submitting the ICC bill to parliament and encouraging parliamentarians to finally adopt a law that will allow Benin to prosecute crimes under International Criminal Court jurisdiction," said **Clément Capo-Chichi, regional coordinator for Africa with the Coalition for the ICC**. "Benin could thus serve once more as an example in the fight against impunity, protecting its citizens from mass atrocities and giving hope for justice to victims.

During a visit to The Hague in February 2014, H. E. Prof. Nassirou Bako-Arifari, then minister of foreign Affairs stated that "[B]enin has supported the ICC since its creation and is committed to maintain its support. We will continue to stress the importance of justice and the fight against impunity throughout the world."

"We hope and keep the strong belief to see the Republic of Benin accelerate and finalize the legislative process in order to make complementarity and cooperation effective in the near future," **Capo-Chichi added**.

BACKGROUND: From 17-19 June 2015, civil society members of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court—a global network of non-governmental organizations celebrating its 20th anniversary—met in Cotonou, Benin for an Africa Regional Strategy Meeting to advance justice for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide through national, regional and international accountability mechanisms. African civil society representatives came from Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. Benin hosts the Africa regional office of the Coalition for the ICC.

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The ICC is the world's only permanent international court to prosecute grave crimes. 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.

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries working in partnership to strengthen international cooperation with the ICC; ensure that the Court is fair, effective and independent; make justice both visible and universal; and advance stronger national laws that deliver justice to victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. For more information, visit: www.coalitionfortheicc.org