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Time Is Now for Vietnam to Join the International Criminal Court*Global Coalition calls on Vietnam to take the regional lead on international justice*

Bangkok/New York/The Hague—Vietnam should act in accordance with its stated commitment to international justice and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Coalition for the ICC said today.

In a letter dated 6 November to Vietnamese President Trương Tấn Sang, the Coalition recognized Vietnam's openness towards the ICC and called on the government of Vietnam to carry the progress it has made so far to its logical conclusion by ratifying the Rome Statute at the earliest possible date.

"The government of Vietnam has displayed a positive and open attitude towards the ICC and a commitment to international justice," **said Amielle del Rosario, the Coalition's Asia-Pacific regional coordinator**. "Vietnam was involved in the process that gave birth to the court and has been seriously considering and making progress towards ratification for nearly a decade—now is the time to join the Court."

In its United Nations Universal Periodic Review in 2010 and 2014, it accepted numerous recommendations to consider ratifying the Rome Statute. In 2012, Vietnam signed an agreement with the European Union that recognized the importance of the ICC and included a commitment to considering joining the Court. Vietnam's Ministry of Justice has also hosted two workshops on the ICC in order to build an understanding of the Court and learn from other Asian countries' experiences.

The letter emphasized that while these initial steps were positive, Vietnam should now sign and ratify the Rome Statute after nearly a decade of studying the treaty. By ratifying, Vietnam would gain recognition for the great strides it has made in its broader effort to bring domestic judicial legislation in line with international standards. The letter noted that incongruities between Vietnamese law and the Rome Statute are relatively limited—Vietnam's penal code already provides for crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes and the crime of aggression to some extent—and that there are few obstacles in the way of Vietnam's ratification.

By ratifying the Rome Statute, Vietnam would establish itself as an important player in international justice, becoming only the fourth Southeast Asian state to join the ICC.

"Due to its tumultuous history, Vietnam has a deep understanding of the importance of ending impunity for grave crimes and can set an example for other states in the region by joining the ICC," **said, Sunil Pal, director of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**. "In doing so, Vietnam would not only help strengthen a growing international system of justice already endorsed by most of the world, but also gain a stake in its operation."

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Cambodia, Timor-Leste and the Philippines are the only states from Southeast Asia that have ratified the Rome Statute.

Accession to the Rome Statute would allow Vietnam to participate as a state party in the sessions of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) and shape the future of international criminal justice by participating in all negotiations and decisions of the ASP, including making proposals on any amendments to the Rome Statute.

BACKGROUND: The ICC is the world's first permanent international court to have jurisdiction over 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 unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

There are currently nine active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic I & II; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, Sudan; Kenya; Libya; Uganda; Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. The ICC has publicly issued 31 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. Two trials are ongoing. The Office of the Prosecutor has made public that it is examining nine situations on four continents, including Afghanistan, Colombia; the registered vessels of the Comoros, Greece and Cambodia; Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq (examination re-opened in 2014), Nigeria and Ukraine. The Office of the Prosecutor has concluded preliminary examinations relating to Iraq, Venezuela, Palestine and the Republic of Korea, declining in each case to open an investigation.

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in over 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.

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Experts from human rights organizations members of the Coalition are available for background information and comment. Contact: communications@coalitionfortheicc.org