

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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El Salvador should take final steps towards joining ICC

Civil society calls on President Sánchez Cerén to continue support for Rome Statute bill

New York/Lima—El Salvador should take the final steps towards joining the International Criminal Court (ICC) following the referral of an accession bill to the country's legislative assembly, the Coalition for the ICC said today.

In a letter to President Salvador Sánchez Cerén, the Coalition called on El Salvador's executive to continue its commendable support for a bill on accession to the Rome Statute, the ICC's founding treaty.

"Over the past years, the international community has actively encouraged El Salvador to join the ICC, one of three Latin American states yet to have done so," **said Michelle Reyes Milk, regional coordinator for the Americas of the Coalition for the ICC.** "Several states in the region, intergovernmental organizations such as the Organization of American States, the Union of South American Nations and the European Union, along with the ICC itself, have repeatedly called on El Salvador to accede to the Rome Statute, providing valuable technical support throughout."

With the bill submitted to the assembly by former president Mauricio Funes last May, the Central American country was chosen as the focus of the Coalition's Campaign for Global Justice this month.

National and international civil society organizations have also given El Salvador technical support, including the Salvadorian Coalition for the ICC.

"We call on the legislative assembly to take concrete and expedite steps for El Salvador to become a state party to the Rome Statute without delay," **said Wilfredo Medrano, coordinator of the Salvadorian Coalition for the ICC.** "The Rome Statute is an instrument that is compatible with the El Salvador constitution. There is no justification that stands in the way of a prompt accession and implementation into national law. El Salvador has the right to be a part of the globalization of international criminal justice, and this would signify an important step in the prevention of grave breaches of human rights and the fight against the most heinous crimes."

In its letter, the Coalition also underlined the importance of the adoption of implementing legislation that would incorporate the Rome Statute within Salvadorian national law.

"The adoption of domestic legislation that would allow El Salvador to exercise its primary jurisdiction for Rome Statute crimes, as well as provisions on cooperation with the Court, is crucial to the principle of complementarity, a key pillar of the ICC," **said Jelena Pia-Comella, deputy executive director for the Coalition for the ICC.** "This principle, ultimately, underlines the primary jurisdiction of national courts in the investigation and prosecution of the gravest crimes under international law".

Cuba, El Salvador and Nicaragua remain the only Latin American states yet to join the ICC.

CONTACTS**In Lima:**

Michelle Reyes Milk
Regional Coordinator for the Americas
Coalition for the ICC
Tel: +51 1-202-7184
reyes@coalitionfortheicc.org

In San Salvador:

Wilfredo Medrano
Coordinator
Salvadorian Coalition for the ICC
Tel: +503 223 45 323
wilfredonet@mixmail.com

In New York:

Jelena Pia-Comella
Deputy Executive Director
Coalition for the ICC
Tel: + 1 646 465 8525
pia@coalitionfortheicc.org

In The Hague:

Niall Matthews
Head of Communications
Coalition for the ICC
Tel: + 1 646 465 8555
matthews@coalitionfortheicc.org



BACKGROUND: The ICC is the world's first permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Currently, the Court is investigating nine situations: The Central African Republic (I and II), The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Darfur (Sudan), Uganda, Kenya, Libya and Mali. 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