



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ghana: Time to prosecute atrocity crimes at home

President Mahama Dramani should domesticate Rome Statute to build on long-standing support for ending impunity for grave crimes

Ghana should take steps to domesticate the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to allow for national prosecution of grave crimes, the Coalition for the ICC said today.

The West African country is the August 2015 focus of the Coalition's Campaign for Global Justice, which encourages states to join the ICC adopt national laws to fight impunity for grave crimes.

In a letter sent this week to President John Dramani Mahama, the Coalition urged Ghana to take the necessary steps to enable its courts to protect its citizens by preventing mass atrocities and punishing those responsible.

"By affirming its unwavering support for the ICC and its profound respect for the Rome Statute, President John Dramani Mahama has once again the opportunity to play a crucial role in improving the efficiency of the Rome Statute by encouraging parliamentarians to enact legislation enabling Ghana to conduct prosecutions for ICC crimes and enacting legislation once it is adopted," **said Clément Capo-Chichi, regional coordinator for Africa at the Coalition for the ICC.** "Ghana could thus strengthen its leadership in democracy by serving once again as an example in the fight against impunity in West Africa and the continent as a whole."

"By signing and ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in the late 1990s, Ghana took the important step to join the global fight against impunity," **said Evelyn Ankumah, executive director of Africa Legal Aid.** "Now it is time to take all measures necessary to translate that commitment into practical reality."

As with other member states of the Economic Community of West African States, Ghana has long affirmed its support to the ICC. In 1999, it became the second African state to accede to the Rome Statute, confirming its commitment to protecting its citizens by preventing mass atrocities and punishing those responsible. This commitment was reiterated at the 13th Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute in December 2014.

Meanwhile, during a high level seminar on cooperation with the ICC in Accra in July 2014, Ghana Attorney General and Minister of Justice H. E. Marietta Brew Appiah-Opong stated that "...[w]e expect from Member States that they commit to the full implementation of the adopted legislation as soon as possible."

The adoption of a national law of compliance with the Rome Statute and its effective implementation will enable Ghana to effectively engage in the fight against impunity.

"We firmly believe that the adoption of the compliance legislation would strengthen national courts and thus activate the practice of complementarity by an African state in the prosecution of these heinous crimes." **Clement Capo-Chichi added.**

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BACKGROUND: *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