



For more information, contact:

In Manila: Evelyn Balais-Serrano
CICC Regional Coordinator for Asia-Pacific
Tel: +632 456 6196 or +632 926 7882
E-mail: serrano@coalitionfortheicc.org

In New York: Brigitte Suhr
Director of Regional Programs
Tel: (+1) 646-465-8540
E-mail: suhr@coalitionfortheicc.org

Michelle Reyes
CICC Outreach Liaison for Asia-Pacific
Tel: (+) 1 646 465 8520
E-mail: reyes@coalitionfortheicc.org

In The Hague: Oriane Maillet
CICC Head of Communications
Tel: (+31) 70 311 10 82
maillet@coalitionfortheicc.org

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Maldives Joins the International Criminal Court as 118th State Party
Global Coalition Hails Accession to the Rome Statute as a Critical Step toward Greater Accountability for Serious Crimes in Asia-Pacific Region

New York - USA - The Coalition for the International Criminal Court today welcomed the accession of Maldives to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a critical step towards greater accountability for serious crimes in the Asia-Pacific region. In joining the ranks of 117 states at the ICC—the world’s first and only permanent, international court with jurisdiction over crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes—Maldives has demonstrated its commitment to international justice and the rule of law, and has laid down a marker for other states to follow in one of the most under-represented regions at the ICC, the Coalition said today.

“The Coalition commends Maldives’ decision to embrace and strengthen the growing international justice system by acceding to the Rome Statute,” said William R. Pace, Convenor of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, a civil society network of more than 2,500 NGOs in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC and improved access to justice for victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. “It is vital that the momentum towards increasing respect for the rule of law and accountability for those responsible for the most serious crimes is seized by other states in the Asia-Pacific region, many of whom are close to joining the ICC,” he added. “Joining the Court represents a strong deterrent effect that will contribute toward the prevention of gross human rights violations in the Asia-Pacific region and to the global fight against impunity.”

Civil society has been urging Maldives to accede to the Rome Statute—the Court’s founding treaty—for many years. In April 2011, civil society organizations from 11 countries within the Asia region met in the Philippines to discuss and implement strategies to advance support for justice and accountability, and called on SAARC member states, including Maldives, to ratify and implement the Rome Statute. Moreover, as a focus country for the Coalition’s Universal Ratification Campaign (a monthly campaign aimed at encouraging states to join the ICC), the Coalition, in a letter dated 2 May 2011 to President H.E. Mr. Mohamed Nasheed, urged the government of Maldives to ensure progress towards completion of its accession procedures.

Maldives is the third state in South Asia to become an ICC member, following Bangladesh and Afghanistan; and the ninth in the entire region with Cambodia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines and Timor-Leste. Given its important role in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as current Chair, represented by Secretary-General H.E. Ms. Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed, it is hoped that Maldives’ accession will spur other states in the region to join the growing global movement for accountability for the most serious crimes.

With the Philippines’ recent ratification on 30 August, Maldives’ accession today, and Malaysia’s advances in its accession process, there is no doubt that the Asia region is taking a stand toward increasing its participation within the Rome Statute system. The Coalition for the ICC has taken important steps to promote this participation, including focusing its Universal Ratification Campaign (URC) on Malaysia (January 2011), the Philippines (February 2011), Indonesia (July 2011), and Nepal (August 2011) in an effort to garner support for ratification among government officials and other stakeholders.

“Maldives’ accession to the ICC reflects its strong desire to be part of the international community’s collective efforts towards international justice,” said Evelyn Balais-Serrano, the Coalition’s Asia Regional Coordinator. “It signals its resolve to move forward in its goal of ending impunity locally and globally, as well to honor its growing commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, as has been demonstrated through its current leadership in SAARC,” she added.

By joining the ICC treaty today, in addition to giving the under-represented Asia region a stronger voice at the ICC, Maldives will be able to elect highly qualified candidates for crucial ICC elections to take place in December 2011 at the tenth session of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP)—the ICC’s governing body—during which state parties will elect six new judges and a new prosecutor, among other key officials.

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 unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. There are currently six active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Kenya; Libya; and Uganda. The ICC has publicly issued 18 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. Three trials are ongoing. The ICC Prosecutor recently requested authorization from judges to open an investigation in Côte d’Ivoire. His office has also made public that it is examining eight situations on four*

continents, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea, Nigeria and Palestine.

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. For more information, visit: www.coalitionfortheicc.org