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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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World Celebrates International Criminal Court 10th Anniversary
*Global Coalition Calls on States to Increase Commitment to Ending Impunity
through Unique System of International Justice*

New York / The Hague—This Sunday, 1 July 2012, the world will celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the first permanent international court to prosecute individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.[†] As civil society organizations from around the world hold events in honor of this day, the Coalition for the ICC called on all states to increase their commitment to ending impunity for grave crimes through this unique system of international justice and to give the Court the support necessary to build upon the accomplishments of its first 10 years.

“When the Rome Statute was adopted at the historic Rome Conference in 1998, many believed it would be decades before this Court would become a reality, and yet just four years later the requisite 60 states had ratified the Statute and the ICC came into being,”

[†] States parties at the 2010 Review Conference of the Rome Statute adopted by consensus amendments to the Rome Statute, including a definition of the crime of aggression. The Court will not be able to exercise its jurisdiction over the crime until at least 30 states parties ratify the amendments or a decision to activate the jurisdiction is made by two-thirds of states parties any time after 1 January 2017.

said William R. Pace, convenor of the Coalition for the ICC—a global network of more than 2,500 non-governmental and civil society organizations in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC. “It is truly remarkable that that figure now stands at 121, ensuring the growth of the Court’s jurisdiction every year,” Pace added. “On this 10th anniversary, we call on all states to redouble their commitment to ending impunity through the Rome Statute system and on all those states yet to join the Court to do so without further delay.”

“The establishment of the ICC in 2002 generated much excitement and hope among victims of atrocities, and defenders of the rule of law and in the human rights community in general seeking to end impunity in the world,” **said Reine Alapani Gansou of the Benin Coalition for the ICC**. “Ten years later and the Court is carrying out several investigations on the African continent but is still facing a lack of cooperation on the part of the African Union, including states parties to ICC, in the execution of its arrest warrants, most notably against Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir for alleged crimes in Darfur.”

“One of the major challenges of the Court for the next decade will be to improve its communication strategy to counteract the politicized and imperialist characterization of the Court by some African critics,” **Alapani Gansou continued**. “Despite the challenges that the ICC has faced, it remains the biggest breakthrough in the fight against impunity in the world and deserves to be supported and to continue to do its work.”

“The creation of the ICC 10 years ago was an historic advance in ending impunity for the worst crimes in international law,” **said Natia Katsitadze, strategic litigation lawyer with the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, a Coalition Steering Committee member**. “On its 10th anniversary, we are aware that there are many challenges ahead for the Court, nevertheless our hope is that the role of the Court in strengthening international justice will be further amplified in the coming years,” Katsitadze added. “We also take this opportunity to once again call on the Court to intensify its efforts so that the serious crimes committed in the 2008 Russia-Georgia war do not go unpunished.”

“Crimes against humanity continue to occur in the MENA [Middle East and North Africa] region with no accountability for their perpetrators. After 10 years of the ICC’s entry to force, its work in bringing justice for victims of worst atrocities is clear, MENA states must join the ICC with no further delay,” **said Nasser Amin, head of the Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Profession**.

“This anniversary is not only important as a symbolic milestone for the International Criminal Court, but in particular because it coincides with the entry into force of the Rome Statute for Guatemala, leaving only three Latin American countries that have yet to join this important mechanism for fighting impunity for serious human rights violations,” **said Sandino Asturias of the Guatemalan Coalition for the ICC**.

In 10 years the ICC has established itself as the center-point for new and innovative system of national and international justice given rise to by the Rome Statute, in which states have the primary responsibility to prosecute grave crimes, with the ICC only acting if they fail to do so.

“Victims of grave crimes and civil society organizations around the world continue to struggle for justice every day, seeing the ICC as an important institution in the fight

against impunity, with global, national and local resonance,” **Pace added.** “Seeking justice through national and international mechanisms mutually reinforces the principle that no one is above the law and that anyone who commits grave crimes must be held accountable,” Pace continued. “This is why, as it begins its second decade, the Court needs the strong political, moral, technical and financial support of the states that brought it into existence in the first place.”

The 10th anniversary comes at a time of transition for the ICC, which in June welcomed its new chief prosecutor, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, as well as the swearing in of five newly elected judges in March. Also in December, a controversial budget was adopted by ICC states parties, reducing the Court’s requested budget at a time when its caseload is growing significantly. In March this year, the Court delivered its first verdict, finding former Congolese rebel leader Thomas Lubanga Dyilo guilty of the war crimes of recruiting and enlisting children and using them actively in hostilities in the DRC in 2002-03, triggering the Court’s groundbreaking reparations mandate for the first time.

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 unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. There are currently seven investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; Cote d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; and Libya. The ICC has publicly issued 20 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. The Court issued a judgment in its first trial on 14 March 2012. Two other trials are ongoing. The ICC prosecutor has also made public that he is conducting seven preliminary examinations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea and Nigeria.*

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.

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