



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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Fatou Bensouda Sworn in as New ICC Prosecutor

Global Coalition Congratulates New Prosecutor and Calls for Building of 10 Years of Gains in Fight against Impunity

The Hague—The Coalition for the International Criminal Court congratulated Ms. Fatou Bensouda as she took office as the new prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) at a swearing-in ceremony at the seat of the Court in The Hague today. Ms. Bensouda—a national of the West African state of The Gambia—must build on the gains of the ICC's first 10 years and consolidate the Court's position as the world's foremost instrument in the fight against impunity for grave crimes, the Coalition said.

Since 2004, Bensouda has served as a deputy to outgoing ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo, during which time she was in charge of the prosecution division of the Office of the Prosecutor. She was elected by consensus to the position of prosecutor at the annual meeting of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP), the ICC's governing body, in New York in December 2011.

Prior to joining the ICC, Bensouda served as a senior legal advisor and head of the legal advisory unit of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), where she had previously worked as a legal adviser. Bensouda has also held a number of high-level positions in the public and private sectors in The Gambia.

"Having spent more than ten years working as a prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the ICC, Fatou Bensouda is extremely qualified to lead the Office of the Prosecutor," said William R. Pace, convenor of the Coalition for the ICC. "With Ms. Bensouda the Court has for the next term an experienced, intelligent and capable prosecutor that will reinforce the ICC's growing position as a major force in global peace and security affairs," Pace continued. "This is an important day for global justice."

Echoing these sentiments, Brigid Inder, Executive Director of the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice said that "Ms Bensouda is taking office at an important time for the ICC and for the development of an international system of justice. The Office of the Prosecutor under her leadership will demonstrate to those who think impunity is assured, that justice is inevitable."

"ICJ-Kenya congratulates Ms. Fatou Bensouda on her swearing-in as the second ICC prosecutor," said George Kegoro, executive director of International Commission of Jurists-Kenya. "The ICC has come a long way and the election of its second prosecutor reflects the growing maturity of the Court and the accompanying confidence that member states have in the Rome Statute system," Kegoro said. "ICJ-Kenya urges ICC member states to redouble their efforts regarding cooperation with the Court, and notes with appreciation the recent position taken by Malawi that it would arrest ICC suspect and Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir if he ever was to go to the country."

ICC judges, ASP President Ambassador Tiina Intelmann, diplomats and other distinguished guests, and civil society attended Bensouda's swearing-in ceremony, including representatives from 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.

The new prosecutor will impact almost every aspect of the ICC for years to come as she will take responsibility for all ongoing and future investigations. This includes the cases currently before the ICC in relation to situations in Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Darfur, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Libya and Uganda, as well as numerous preliminary examinations of potential investigations in Asia, Africa Europe, and Latin America. Of immediate importance will be the sentencing and reparations phase of the trial of Thomas Lubanga, in which the ICC's first verdict was delivered in March 2012.

"Finally, the indomitable Fatou Bensouda is set to take over the reins of prosecutorial powers in the ICC. We look forward to a court that will balance its operations in a way that all state parties will be reassured of a sense of belonging; a court that will make sexual violence a priority," said Oby Nwankwo, executive director of the Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC) in Nigeria. "Quoting Henry Ford 'Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal', we wish her a successful, result oriented tenure as Chief Prosecutor of the ICC and urge her to keep her eyes on the goal."

“From Goma to Darfur and beyond, the need to end impunity for the world’s gravest crimes is increasing, and as prosecutor Ms. Bensouda will have tremendous responsibility for bringing justice to all parts of the world,” Pace added. He further mentioned that “The Coalition is particularly encouraged by the new prosecutor’s intentions to work for victims, to prioritize the prosecution of grave crimes against women and children, and to build on the unique relationship between the ICC and civil society.”

Bensouda’s election as ICC prosecutor was the culmination of a search process that began in the spring of 2011 under the direction of the Search Committee for the position of ICC Prosecutor, a body especially established by the ASP to facilitate the nomination and election of the next prosecutor by consensus. Of 52 individuals initially identified by the Search Committee, eight were interviewed before four were recommended as potential nominees. Informal consultations among states parties and facilitated by the ASP president then yielded to an agreement to select Bensouda as the nominee. She was formally nominated by The Gambia and her nomination was co-sponsored by 66 ICC states parties, leading to her election by acclamation in December 2011.

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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