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World Celebrates International Justice Day
Global Coalition Calls on States to Make Justice a Priority

New York / The Hague—On 17 July, the world will celebrate International Justice Day, a commemoration of the adoption of the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and a celebration of the achievements of international criminal justice. On this occasion, we call on all governments to make a firm commitment to make international justice a priority and seek to hold accountable those who are suspected of committed the gravest crimes, the Coalition for the ICC said.

“The journey from Nuremberg to ‘Never Again’ has proven to be extremely difficult and may still take decades to complete, but the progress of the last 14 years has been phenomenal,” said William R. Pace, convenor of the Coalition for the ICC. “The tools for ending impunity exist for perhaps the first time in history; it is now a matter of galvanizing universal political will to make them fully operational.”

International Justice Day is also an opportunity for the world community to celebrate the historic advances in ending impunity for the worst crimes in international law. Since 1993, around 200 trials dealing with terrible crimes committed in 12 countries have been held by six international and special tribunals. Similar trials are ongoing at the national level.

“International Justice Day is an opportunity for the world community to celebrate the historic advances in ending impunity for the worst crimes in international law as 14 years ago on this date, the Rome Statute was adopted by an overwhelming vote of 120

states,” said Raj Kumar Siwakoti, secretary general of FOHRID Human Rights and Democratic Forum. “Today, 121 states have joined the Court and the number keeps growing. FOHRID is celebrating this day in solidarity with victims of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes.”

“As people the world over celebrate International Justice Day, emphasis should be guided toward the plight of the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and to the families looking for their loved ones among the dead and the living both,” said Daniel Okello, programs coordinator for Lira NGO Forum in Northern Uganda. “While this day has been widely celebrated in Africa, the one concern that remains is the commitment by ICC member states to realize the actual meaning of International Justice Day, bearing in mind the obligations attached to membership in the Court.”

“On the occasion of International Justice Day, it is now the chance for civil society organizations to review and renew their engagement and commitment towards the ICC through urging states to join the Court, launching training for lawyers, judges and stakeholders, and documenting the crimes against humanity committed in the region to ensure the accountability of its perpetrators,” said Asem Rababa of the Adaleh Center for Human Rights Studies.

At the ICC, three trials are being conducted, investigations in seven countries have been opened, and 22 public arrest warrants and at least nine summonses have been issued. Allegations of crimes committed in many other countries are also being considered by the office of the ICC Prosecutor.

This past year witnessed the Special Court for Sierra Leone convict former Liberian president Charles Taylor for aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity—the first conviction of a head of state since Nuremberg—as well as the first verdict in an ICC case, the conviction of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo for conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 and using them to participate in hostilities.

“The ICC is a crucial institution to advance gender justice and to provide accountability for gender-based crimes. With its first trial judgment and sentence delivered, and the ICC entering a new era under Prosecutor Bensouda, the Court is well positioned to make substantial progress for victims and survivors of the most serious crimes,” said Brigid Inder, executive director of the Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice. “The ICC has come a long way in the ten years since it began its work. On this International Justice Day, the Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice, together with our 6,000 grassroots members and partners, celebrates the widespread and strong support for the ICC from governments, advocates and citizens around the world.”

“I believe that the ICC represents a great chance to confront the past. Lubanga and other trials from DRC and six other countries give us hope for the future,” said Dr. Günel Kurşun, spokesperson of the Turkish Coalition for the ICC. “I urge the government of the Republic of Turkey to ratify the Rome Statute as soon as possible, as promised 10 years ago,” Kurşun added. “Turkey’s accession to the system will be a big asset in resolving crises in countries like Syria and give us more courage to fight against impunity in our region.”

“We have 121 state parties—nearly two-thirds of the world’s nations—and in Turkey and 30 other countries national coalitions are working to advance their governments’ ratifications. The wheels of international justice are advancing, and the places where impunity still survives are shrinking, though getting some major powers to join the Court remains a massive challenge,” said Pace. “With continued support, victims of the world’s most serious crimes will see justice done and have opportunities to seek redress,” Pace added. “We are approaching a moment in history where even the most powerful government leaders will be held responsible if they commit ICC crimes.”

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 22 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 Office of the Prosecutor has also made public that it 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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