

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Laos: Acceding to Rome Statute Is In Line With Commitment to Rule of Law**

Global Coalition calls on Lao People's Democratic Republic to affirm its stand in support of rule of law and justice

**New York/Manila**—Laos should demonstrate its commitment to the fight to end impunity by joining the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Coalition for the ICC said today.

In a letter to President Lt. Gen. Choummaly Sayasone, the Coalition called for Laos to accede to the Rome Statute, in fulfillment of its commitment towards upholding rule of law, international justice and peace.

"Acceding to the Rome Statute is a crucial step that Laos should take to uphold international justice and rule of law," said Evelyn Serrano, executive director of FORUM ASIA. "As a state party, they can be actively involved in the shaping of the future on international law and justice through participation in the Assembly of State Parties."

Government representatives have made several promising statements on its ICC position. In addition to their official response to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review in May 2010, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) also stated that it attaches importance to international law during the UN High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law in 2012.

One of the obstacles for Lao PDR's accession is that the process of ratifying or acceding international treaties involves having to enact a domestic implementing legislation first. The Coalition urged the Laotian government to look into examples set forth by other countries that have enacted implementing legislation. There are also several non-state parties that have successfully incorporated, to some extent, the crimes covered by the Rome Statute into their domestic laws.

"The challenge of enacting an implementing law could easily be overcome with the proper level of commitment," said Brigitte Suhr, director of regional programs for the Coalition for the ICC. "They could take examples from countries such as the Philippines, which enacted a complementary law before it ratified, and Vietnam, which has incorporated the Rome Statute crimes even though to date it still remains a non-state party."

Lao PDR would be the 18<sup>th</sup> country in the Asia-Pacific region to join the ICC if it accedes to the Statute, joining Cambodia, the Philippines and Timor Leste as states parties in the Southeast Asia part of the region.

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**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 eight investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; Cote d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; Libya; and Mali. 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 eight preliminary examinations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea, Nigeria, and the Comoros.

**CONTACTS****In New York:**

Ms. Brigitte Suhr  
 Director of Regional Programs  
 Coalition for the ICC  
 Tel: +1 (646) 465-8540  
[suhr@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:suhr@coalitionfortheicc.org)

Ms. Linda Gueye  
 Head of Communications  
 Coalition for the ICC  
 Tel: + 1 646 465 8516  
[gueye@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:gueye@coalitionfortheicc.org)

**In Bangkok:**

Ms. Evelyn Balais-Serrano  
 Executive Director  
 FORUM ASIA  
[evelyn@forum-asia.org](mailto:evelyn@forum-asia.org)



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](http://www.coalitionfortheicc.org)

Experts from human rights organizations members of the Coalition are available for background information and comment. Contact: [communications@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:communications@coalitionfortheicc.org)