



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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**Global Coalition Urges Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu to Join the
International Criminal Court**

Joining the ICC will reaffirm the Pacific's resolve to contribute in the world's efforts to uphold human rights and end impunity

New York/Manila—Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu should accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and align their national laws with the obligations under the treaty, the Coalition for the ICC said.

These three Pacific countries are the Coalition's focus countries for its Universal Ratification Campaign (URC) this month, an initiative which aims to secure universal acceptance of the Rome Statute.

"Individual island states in the Pacific may be generally small and separated, but collectively, they can contribute significantly to regional and global efforts towards achieving peace and justice," said Evelyn Balais-Serrano, the Coalition's regional coordinator for Asia-Pacific. "While Pacific states enjoy an absence of major conflicts or threats to their security as nations, their ratification would be an expression of solidarity with victims of grave crimes wherever they take place in the world."

To date, there are 122 states that have joined the ICC; 17 of those are from the Asia-Pacific. Out of 22 states in the Pacific, eight are members of the Court: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Samoa and Vanuatu. This situation makes the Asia-Pacific region significantly underrepresented at the Court. Ratification of the Rome Statute by Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu would increase the representation of the region as well as bolster the Court's universality.

In a letter sent to the governments of Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu, the Coalition called on these

states to finally accede to the Rome Statute as an expression of their countries' "commitment to respecting human rights, justice and the rule of law." As states parties, these countries would have the right to participate in all negotiations and decisions of the Assembly of State Parties to the Rome Statute, such as making proposals on any amendments to the Statute, nominating and electing candidates for the positions of judge or prosecutor and preference given to their nationals in the recruitment of staff and personnel of the Court.

"The Pacific countries have nothing to lose, but everything to gain when they join the ICC," Balais Serrano stressed. "The diplomatic mileage they will reap in the process can help them greatly in their needs, even if these are mostly related to climate change and other environmental concerns."

The Coalition noted the three states' participation in the ICC Pacific Outreach Roundtable organized in 2012 by the governments of Australia, New Zealand and the Commonwealth Secretariat in Sydney, Australia.

Background: *The ICC is the world's first permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. One hundred and twenty-two states have joined the Rome Statute, the Court's founding treaty. The Statute is one of the first international treaties to extensively address gender-based crimes as crimes against humanity, war crimes, and in some instances, genocide. Specifically, the Statute recognizes rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilizations, gender-based persecutions, trafficking of persons particularly women and children, and sexual violence as among the most serious of crimes of concern to the international community as a whole. 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 active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; Cote d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; Libya; and Mali.*

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 genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. For more information, visit: www.coalitionfortheicc.org.

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