

New York, 4 October 2013

Your Excellencies,

I have the honor of writing to you on behalf of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court – a global network of over 2,500 civil society organizations in 150 countries – in relation to the **UN Security Council’s mission to the Great Lakes Region and the African Union (AU) from 3 to 9 October, 2013**. We strongly urge you as Council members and States Parties to the Rome Statute to use the visit to Addis Ababa on the occasion of the Annual Consultative Meeting with the African Union’s Peace and Security Council as an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in upholding accountability and providing redress for victims of the most serious crimes known to humankind.

We wish to underscore that the African Union, its member states and the International Criminal Court share a common goal of ending impunity for the most serious international crimes. The AU has consistently stated that it rejects impunity; this commitment is demonstrated in Article 4(o) of the Constitutive Act and by the fact that 34 AU member states are States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC.

As you know, on 11 and 12 October, an Extraordinary AU Summit is scheduled to address “Africa’s Relationship with the ICC”. African states may be requested to withdraw from the Rome Statute or terminate cooperation with the Court, in contravention to the continent’s commitment to human rights and justice, and at the risk of undermining lasting peace, redress for victims and sustainable development based on the rule of law.

We would therefore urge you, as a strong supporter of the ICC and member of the Security Council to call on African States Parties to support the ICC and abide by their obligations under the Statute at your meetings with the AU Commission, for instance during sessions on the Central African Republic, the Great Lakes Region, Mali and Sudan, as well as during bilateral discussions with relevant actors in Addis Ababa and on the occasion of prior encounters in the Great Lakes Region.

The Coalition furthermore requests Council members to call on African States which are committed to the rule of law to attend the Extraordinary Summit and voice their support for the integrity and the universality of the Statute. In addition, African States Parties can be encouraged to raise and discuss ICC-related grievances and concerns which may arise with other States Parties at the ICC Assembly of States Parties, which is the most appropriate body to consider ICC reform proposals.

Excellency, we also invite Council members to advocate for an opportunity for the ICC Prosecutor to brief the AU Peace and Security Council which would facilitate an open and transparent dialogue.

The Court's effectiveness can only be strengthened through sustained cooperation and an expansion of the Court's reach by fostering additional accessions to the Statute, rather than by diminishing its universality. African leaders should call on their counterparts in other regions around the world to follow Africa's lead by resorting to the ICC, seeking universal ratification, including by all permanent members of the Security Council. This is the best strategy to address double standards and selectivity in the application of the Rome Statute. At this juncture in the Court's life, it cannot be overstated that sustained and outspoken high-level political support for the ICC is critical to enable it to deliver on its mandate and proceed in upholding accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Finally, in discussions on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes Region, we urge Security Council members to reaffirm the vital importance of accountability for the most serious international crimes in the Eastern DRC through domestic and international mechanisms.

Excellency, it is our sincere hope that every Security Council member endorses the goals of preventing and ending impunity for the most heinous crimes and every Council member stands up for the victims of these gross violations. We hope you express strong support for the Court at this pivotal stage in its development throughout the Council's visit to the Great Lakes Region and Addis Ababa.

Yours sincerely,



William Pace
Convenor
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CC.:

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