



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

For more information, contact:

In Cote d'Ivoire: Ali Ouattara
President
Ivorian Coalition for the ICC
Tel: +225 07 53 30 80
coalivoicpi@yahoo.fr

In Benin: Francis Dako
Regional Coordinator for Africa
Coalition for the ICC
Tel: +229 21 32 28 06
dako@coalitionfortheicc.org

In New York: Brigitte Suhr
Director of Regional Programs
Coalition for the ICC
Tel: (+1) 646-465-8540
suhr@coalitionfortheicc.org

Tania Deigni
Regional Program Assistant
Coalition for the ICC
Tel: (+) 1 646 465 8513
deigni@coalitionfortheicc.org

Linda Gueye
Senior Communications Officer
Francophone Africa
Coalition for the ICC
Tel: (+) 1 646 465 8516
gueye@coalitionfortheicc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2 March 2012

Global Coalition Urges Côte d'Ivoire to Ratify the Rome Statute
Civil Society Says Treaty Ratification should be a Priority to End Impunity

New York, USA—The Coalition for the International Criminal Court today called on the government of Côte d'Ivoire to take concrete steps to fight against impunity for grave crimes by ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Coalition has chosen Côte d'Ivoire and Monaco as the focus countries for its March 2012 Universal Ratification Campaign (URC), a monthly campaign to encourage countries to join the Rome Statute—the founding treaty of the first permanent international court capable of trying perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Today, in a letter addressed to H.E. President Alassane Ouattara, the Coalition—a global network of more than 2,500 civil society organizations in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC and improved access to justice for victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity—urged the Ivorian government to prioritize the ratification of the Rome Statute this year and to facilitate the comprehensive implementation of the Rome

Statute into Côte d'Ivoire's domestic law as soon as possible.

“Successive Ivorian governments have shown a political will to end the humanitarian tragedy that faced Côte d'Ivoire for a decade by showing commitment to justice and reconciliation,” stated Francis Dako, the Coalition's regional coordinator for Africa. “It is time for the current government to act on this desire for justice by ratifying the Rome Statute of the ICC, which provides a critical mechanism for a fair and independent court capable of helping Ivorians achieve a lasting peace.”

In April 2003, the government of Côte d'Ivoire accepted the jurisdiction of the ICC under the provisions of Article 12 (3) of the Rome Statute while it sought an analysis from the Constitutional Court on the possibility of ratification. In December 2003, the Constitutional Court caused progress on ratification to be halted as it ruled that the Ivorian Constitution would need to be amended for ratification to be possible. With a constitutional amendment not possible, Côte d'Ivoire reconfirmed its acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction in December 2010. In 2011, the Court opened a formal investigation into the situation resulting in a case against former president Laurent Gbagbo. On 22 February 2012, ICC Pre-Trial Chamber III extended the temporal jurisdiction of the Court in the situation; thus, it is likely that the Office of the Prosecutor may soon open more cases stemming from the investigation there.

“Since its establishment, the Ivorian Coalition for the ICC (CI-CPI) has always advocated for Cote d'Ivoire to ratify the Rome Statute and considered Cote d'Ivoire's recognition of the Court's jurisdiction as an unfinished symphony,” said Ali Ouattara, president of the Ivorian Coalition for the ICC. “To fight against impunity, to avoid the repetition of serious crimes and to ensure lasting peace, we must ratify the Rome Statute establishing the Court. We thus urge the Ivorian authorities to take the final steps to ratify the Rome Statute in order to be in line with international standards of justice and human rights, which will facilitate the course of justice both nationally and internationally.”

29 March 2012 will mark the one year anniversary of the Duékoué massacre, one of the worst human rights abuses in the country's history where 800 people were allegedly killed. In addition, in March, the world will observe International Women's Day and the International Day for the Rights to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims. By ratifying the Rome Statute, the Ivorian government would ensure that victims of grave crimes committed in Cote d'Ivoire since 2002 have full access to an independent justice.

“March is an opportune and symbolic time for President Ouattara and the Ivorian government to immediately take the necessary steps to ratify the Rome Statute,” stated Arnel Lahiriri Byamungu, the Coalition's francophone Africa situations liaison. “The Ivorian National Assembly—the national institution responsible for the adoption of various international instruments—will resume its work in the near future, offering an opportunity for the Ivorian government to significantly advance in its ratification efforts and ensure that all perpetrators of alleged crimes are held accountable.”

To date, 120 states worldwide have joined the Rome Statute. As a state party, Côte d'Ivoire would assume a role in advancing human rights, accountability, justice, and an end to impunity for grave crimes in Africa and in the world. In addition, it would be able to actively participate in a more significant manner in the annual Assembly of States Parties of the ICC during which states make important decisions in relation to the administration of the Court, including the election of judges, prosecutors, and other Court officials as well as the adoption of the Court's budget.

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 19 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. Three trials are ongoing. The ICC 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 Palestine.

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

###