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Comoros and St. Kitts & Nevis Join the International Criminal Court

Global Momentum for International Justice Continues as ICC States Parties Reach 102 Countries

(New York, 31 August 2006) – In the course of the last two weeks, both Comoros and St. Kitts & Nevis have joined the International Criminal Court (ICC), becoming the 101st and 102nd States Parties to the ICC treaty respectively. On 18 August 2006, Comoros deposited its instrument of ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court followed four days later by St. Kitts & Nevis who deposited on 22 August. While Comoros had signed the Rome Statute of the ICC on 22 September 2000, they had failed to ratify until now. In October 2005, Mexico's ratification brought the total number of ICC States Parties to a landmark 100.

William Pace, Convenor of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) – a network of more than 2,000 non-governmental and civil society organizations that support a fair, effective and independent ICC – said, “Back in 2002 when the 60 countries needed to bring the Court’s treaty into effect had been reached, it seemed remarkable that this had taken place in just four years. Now, just another four years later, we see that the Court’s momentum has only continued to grow at an astonishing rate; with Comoros’ ratification, the total number of African countries that are party to the ICC is now 28 and St. Kitts & Nevis’ ratification makes them the 23rd country in the Americas to join the Court. Both Comoros and St. Kitts & Nevis have joined with the majority of the world in showing their clear support for global justice and the ending of impunity.”

Commenting on the Comoros ratification, Deputy Assoumani Youssouf Mondoha, the Deputy of the ruling party in Comoros and the current Chair of the Comoros National Assembly’s Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security, said, “I feel that I have accomplished a mission. I am proud that I accomplished the right mission because I am convinced that the International Criminal Court is really needed for Comoros. The Court will play a deterrent role in Comoros by preventing potential international crimes from being committed. It will also help in bringing justice to victims and their relatives, in establishing the truth and in reinforcing the national reconciliation process in Comoros.”

Francis Dako, the CICC’s Regional Coordinator for Francophone Africa, also welcomed the new ratification stating, “This ratification by Comoros confirms the general commitment of African leaders and African people – regardless of race or religion - to consolidating the new system of international criminal justice that the Court represents. The International Criminal Court is an essential instrument in the prevention of the commission of international crimes and in the fight against impunity which has been so damaging to Africa for so long”.

Commenting on the St. Kitts & Nevis’ ratification, Francesca Varda, the Coalition’s Outreach Coordinator for Latin American and the Caribbean said, “The CICC has been campaigning for increased participation by CARICOM Member States in the ICC. In June, we sent letters to all those CARICOM members who had yet to ratify the ICC treaty. We are pleased to learn that St. Kitts & Nevis has acceded and we take this opportunity to once again call on St. Lucia, Suriname, Grenada, Jamaica, Bahamas and Haiti to join the Court. The CARICOM showed leadership in the creation of the ICC. Now it’s time to ensure that legacy is going forward by having all CARICOM states join the Court.”

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Notes for Editors:

1. The International Criminal Court is the world’s first permanent global criminal court. It is *not* an organ of the United Nations but rather an independent body established in The Hague, the Netherlands on 1 July 2002 when the ICC treaty came into force. The ICC does not have jurisdiction over crimes prior to that date.
2. The Court is currently investigating cases in Darfur, Sudan; the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and Uganda. The ICC Prosecutor’s office is also analyzing eight situations on four continents including the Central African Republic and Cote d’Ivoire.

3. The Court unsealed its first arrest warrants for five top leaders of the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) on 13 October 2005. The LRA is believed to have orchestrated tens of thousands of killings, abductions, and gender-based crimes in Uganda during the course of the Ugandan civil war which began in 1986.
4. On 17 March 2006, the ICC unsealed its arrest warrant for Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, leader of the political and military movement, the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC), and also announced that Mr. Lubanga had been arrested and transferred from DRC to The Hague. Mr. Lubanga is alleged to have been involved in forcefully enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 and using them to participate actively in hostilities in the DRC.
5. The CICC is *not* an organ of the Court but rather an independent NGO network of more than 2,000 civil society organizations working to promote a fair, effective and independent ICC. The CICC was established in February 1995 and has offices in New York City and The Hague as well as seven regional offices around the world. For more information: www.iccnw.org