



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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

**For more information, contact:**

**In Benin:** Francis Dako  
CICC Regional Coordinator for Africa  
Tel: (+) 229 21 32 28 06  
E-mail: [dako@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:dako@coalitionfortheicc.org)

**In New York:** Tania Deigni  
CICC Regional Program Assistant  
Tel: (+) 1 646 465 8513  
E-mail: [deigni@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:deigni@coalitionfortheicc.org)

**In New York:** Linda Gueye  
CICC Senior Communications Officer for Francophone Africa  
Tel: (+1) 646 465 8516  
[gueye@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:gueye@coalitionfortheicc.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1 June 2011

## **Global Coalition Urges Mauritania to Join the International Criminal Court**

*Coalition Says Rome Statute Accession should be a Priority to End Impunity*

**Cotonou, Benin/ New York, USA** – The Coalition for the International Criminal Court —a global network of more than 2,500 non-governmental and civil society organizations in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent International Criminal Court (ICC) —called on Mauritania to embrace a new system of international justice and advance the rule of law by acceding to the Rome Statute.

The Coalition has chosen Mauritania as the focus for its June 2011 Universal Ratification Campaign, a monthly campaign launched 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.

In a letter dated 1 June 2011 to Mauritanian President H.E. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the Coalition urged the government of Mauritania to prioritize its accession to the Rome Statute. The Statute came into force in July 2002 and now has the support of well over half of the world's nations. With Grenada's recent accession on 19 May 2011, 115 states have ratified or acceded to the treaty, and 139 are signatories.

The Coalition encouraged Mauritania to engage in serious discussions and advances toward acceding to the Rome Statute. The government of Mauritania recently reaffirmed to the Human Rights Council that it would continue to work for the promotion and protection of human rights. In line with the government's commitments, and given that the Rome Statute is an important tool to protect human rights and advance the rule of law, the Coalition urged President Aziz to ensure prompt treatment of Mauritania's accession dossier.

"The recent Arab Spring demonstrates the willingness of the people to advance principles of democracy and ensure accountability for human rights abuses," noted Francis Dako, CICC Africa Regional Coordinator. "We urge the Government of Mauritania to seize this present momentum and illustrate Mauritania's commitment to international justice and respect for human rights by acceding to the Rome Statute."

Mauritania's accession to the Rome Statute will contribute toward strengthening the African presence at the ICC. In addition, by acceding to the Rome Statute and embracing the principle of complementarity, Mauritania will retain the duty to exercise primary jurisdiction over crimes that could fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC.

"We hope the Mauritanian government will join other reforming governments in North Africa that have made the commitment to ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC," said William R. Pace, Convenor of the Coalition. "Such commitment advances the goal of ending impunity for the worst crimes in international law, crimes that continue to plague not only North Africa but all regions in the world," he added.

As a state party, Mauritania would be able to actively participate in the annual Assembly of States Parties (ASP) of the ICC during which states make important decisions in relation to the administration of the Court, including the election of judges and prosecutors. In December 2011, six new judges, a new chief prosecutor and other Court officials will be elected. The deadline for nominating candidates for these important posts is currently 2 September 2011. If Mauritania accedes to the treaty by that date, any nomination for judge becomes valid.

**Background:** *The ICC is the world's first, permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. There are currently 115 ICC states parties. Central to the Court's mandate is the principle of complementarity, which holds that the Court will only intervene if national legal systems are unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. There are currently six active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Kenya; Libya; and Uganda. The ICC has publicly issued 15 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. Three trials are ongoing. The Office of the Prosecutor has made public that it is examining at least nine situations on four continents, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea, Nigeria, and Palestine.*

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court includes 2,500 civil society organizations in 150 different 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)

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