

Parliamentarians for Global Action

Guatemala marks the celebrations of the 10th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court by becoming its 121st State Party

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Parliamentarians around the world praise Guatemala for its decision to consolidate peace through the rule of law

Today, Guatemala deposited its instrument of accession to the Rome Statute at the United Nations, becoming the 121st State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Parliamentarians for Global Action is particularly pleased with this accession which is testimony to Guatemala's policy in improving its own human rights situation and guaranteeing the non-repetition of serious crimes that, in the past, have devastated the mental and physical welfare of its people.

PGA strongly hopes that this step taken by Guatemala will give an additional impetus and inspire pending decisions on Rome Statute accession in other countries around the world, including El Salvador, Nicaragua, Nepal and Indonesia where the integration of accountability as a peace-making and state-building strategy could also serve a vital goal in achieving long term political and social stability.

ICC Process in Guatemala

The decision-making process that culminated in the deposit of the Instrument of Accession by Guatemala was long and arduous, in spite of the ongoing support of the Government and the mobilization of civil society and some parliamentarians to join the ICC. The ICC accession bill had been blocked in Congress since 2002 and despite a multi-party agreement brokered on this bill since 2006 by PGA member, **Dip. Antonio Arenales Forno** (currently Minister of State for Peace), regrettably Parliament failed continuously to adopt it.

It was not until January 2012, that newly elected President **Otto Perez Molina** and Vice President **Roxana Baldetti** managed to create consensus in the Congress to have the bill approved. The breakthrough in the process was facilitated in 2007, when a meeting between then Members of Parliament **Perez Molina** and **Baldetti** with the ICC President, **Judge Philippe Kirsch**, allowed for the clarification of concerns about the ICC regime and followed with the commitment of Perez Molina to support the accession of the Rome Statute from the legislative branch, and eventually from the executive one.

PGA congratulates all parliamentarians in Guatemala and its members around the world, civil society, government officials, and international authorities –including the Presidency of the Assembly of States Parties, the Presidency of the Court and the Prosecutor – who relentlessly worked to affirm the importance of accession to the Rome Statute by Guatemala.

PGA looks forward to continuing to work in Guatemala, in particular to promote the adoption of legislation that incorporates the crimes contained in the Rome Statute, as well as mechanisms for cooperation with the Court to prevent the existence of safe havens for suspects or fugitives. PGA is also confident that Guatemala will become one of the first 30 states parties to ratify the Kampala amendments, including on the crime of aggression.

Statements by PGA members:

Dip. Mlnou Tavarez Mirabal (Dominican Republic), Deputy Convenor International Law and Human Rights Programme

I celebrate the decision by Guatemala especially because it brings hope to see El Salvador and Nicaragua join the communities of nations committed with the delivery of justice at the international level. With their decision we will ensure that Latin America becomes the first region to embrace the precepts of equality of all individuals and all nations before the law as enshrined in the Rome Statute

Dip. Mario Tenorio (El Salvador, GANA)

As a parliamentarian, PGA member and member of the GANA group in the Assembly of El Salvador, I celebrate the ratification by Guatemala and reiterate that I and my political group are in disposition to see El Salvador accede to the Rome Statute. We, GANA, sincerely hope that the government agrees to submit the ratification bill for debate at the legislative branch. The ratification of the Rome Statute is fundamental to our past twenty years of history, to distance ourselves from revenge and bring us closer to reconciliation.

Dip. Sigfrido Reyes (El Salvador – FMLN)

It is with great satisfaction that our friend and neighbouring country from Central America, that has lived a traumatic experience in the past decades suffering from crimes against the population, war crimes, ethnocide and widespread violations of human rights, has acceded to the ICC. The accession of Guatemala is a strong signal to Central America and to the International Community that these abhorrent crimes cannot be tolerated or be left unpunished.

As Speaker of the National Assembly of my country, and member of PGA, I celebrate this ratification. And I hope that the government of my country will soon follow this example by submitting to our Assembly the ratification bill of the ICC. The government will be indebted to its own people until the ratification of the Rome Statute is accomplished.

Mr. Kula Segaran, MP (Malaysia)

The ratification by Guatemala is yet another step forward by an independent nation which indicates that, no matter how big or small a country is, becoming part of the International Criminal Court is of paramount importance. In order to deter genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression, and to ensure the rule of law generally, all nations should become party to treaties which seek to deter the commission of such crimes and hold accountable those who commit them, such as the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Malaysia should not delay its ratification of the Rome Statute any further—in particular given the Cabinet's indication a year ago that it will become party thereto. Further delay sends a most unfortunate signal regarding Malaysia's commitment to international justice and accountability.

About PGA

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is a network of members of parliament from all regions of the world who, in their individual capacity, have pledged to mobilize political will for the effective operation of the ICC and domestic jurisdictions to end impunity.

Members of PGA have contributed to 75 of the 121 ratifications of, or accession to the Rome Statute to date. PGA is a member of the Steering Committee of the Coalition for the ICC.

The PGA Campaign for the Universality and Effectiveness of the Rome Statute system receives support from the European Commission, European Union, the Governments of Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland, and from Humanity United.

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For more about the work of PGA in Guatemala consult www.pgaction.org