



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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**GLOBAL COALITION CALLS ON RWANDA TO JOIN INTERNATIONAL
CRIMINAL COURT**

*Civil Society encourages Rwanda's accession to enshrine its policy of fighting
against impunity for grave crimes*

New York, USA—On 13 February, the Coalition for the International Criminal Court called on Rwanda to demonstrate its commitment to justice and the rule of law by acceding to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)—the world's first and only permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Rwanda is the focus of the Coalition's Universal Ratification Campaign (URC) for February 2013, a monthly campaign launched to call upon a different country to join the Rome Statute—the ICC's founding treaty.

“The Rome Statute was adopted by states that truly believe in concerted global efforts in the fight against impunity. Knowing the atrocities that Rwanda underwent, the ratifying of this treaty can only be a major stepping stone towards our quest in seeing the justice for the main perpetrators of the heinous atrocities that almost

brought the Nation to its knees and the victims' families as well," said Nzovu Job Ruzage, executive director of Coalition member Human Rights First Rwanda Association. "Not only will this court act as a deterring factor against future occurrences of similar heinous crimes wherever they occur in the world, but it is a hope for ending the culture of impunity."

In a letter dated 13 February 2013 to Rwandan Prime Minister H.E. Pierre Damien Habumuremyi, the Coalition called again on the government of Rwanda to take concrete steps to finalize accession to the Rome Statute, stating that the ICC should be welcome in Rwanda, considering that the fight against impunity has been on the government's agenda for the past several years. The Coalition also acknowledged the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) closing process and underlined its legacy, as well as the *Gacaca* tribunal, as important tools that address human rights violations through different angles, in their shared objective of building a culture of peace.

"Rwanda is currently a post-conflict country dealing with several tough issues in political, economic and social areas. However, despite the economic growth in the country, the justice sector faces serious obstacles linked to the lack of independence of the judiciary and frequent interference of executive power into judicial affairs. In this context, acceding to the ICC treaty would be one step on the path to establishing of a culture of justice and confidence-building amongst the people," said Armel Luhiriri Byamungu, Coalition Francophone situations liaison officer.

As the world celebrates the 11th anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute, this new system of international justice now has the support of nearly two-thirds of the world's nations, with 122 states having ratified or acceded to the treaty. To date, there are 34 states in Africa that have ratified or acceded to the Rome Statute, with the Cote d'Ivoire as our most recent addition this month. By joining the ICC, Rwanda would set an important example for states throughout the region that have yet to embrace the Rome Statute system.

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 eight investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; Cote d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; Libya; and Mali. The ICC has publicly issued 20 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. The Court issued a judgment in its first trial on 14 March 2012. Two other trials are ongoing. The ICC's Office of the Prosecutor has also made public that it is conducting seven preliminary examinations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea and Nigeria.*

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent International Criminal Court and improved access to justice for victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. For more information, visit: www.coalitionfortheicc.org.

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