



**For more information, contact:**

**In Rwanda:** Byamungu Armel Luhiriri  
Francophone Africa Situations Liaison Coordinator  
Coalition for the ICC  
Tel: (+) 1 646 465 8513  
[byamungu@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:byamungu@coalitionfortheicc.org)

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

Alexandra Sajben  
Regional Program Assistant  
Coalition for the ICC  
Tel: (+) 1 646 465 8513  
[sajben@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:sajben@coalitionfortheicc.org)

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Global Coalition Urges Rwanda to Accede to the Rome Statute**  
Rwanda Should Take Steps to Support Justice

**New York, USA**—The Coalition for the International Criminal Court today called upon Rwanda to demonstrate its commitment to international justice and the fight against impunity for grave crimes by acceding to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Coalition has chosen Rwanda and Nepal as the focus of its August 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.

Eight months ago, the Coalition called upon the Rwandan government to accede to the Rome Statute and join the 33 other African states that have recognized the necessity of the ICC. However, Rwanda has not yet acceded to the Rome Statute, which would provide a critical mechanism for continuing a fair and effective means of pursuing justice.

Today, 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—sent a letter to President Paul Kagame, renewing its call for the Rwandan government to act upon this matter, through acceding to the Rome Statute as well as pursuing complementary domestic legislation.

“Despite the efforts of the Rwandan government to meet economic, social and political challenges, there is still room for improvement in terms of an independent judiciary,” said Byamungu Armel Luhiriri, the Coalition’s Francophone Africa situations liaison coordinator. “The only way for Rwanda to effectively fight against impunity for international crimes is to accede to the Rome Statute. Rwanda would not only be joining the international efforts to put an end to impunity but would also have an opportunity to reform and adapt its national jurisdiction to fight more effectively against heinous crimes.”

“With Rwanda’s tragic history of grave crimes, the government’s commitment to justice should be unwavering,” said Brigitte Suhr, the Coalition’s director of regional programs. “Rwanda should take the step now to join the Court, as a symbol of its continued commitment to deter crimes and to prosecute those that do occur. Many African states have joined the Court, but Rwanda is a notable exception.”

Rwanda’s accession to the treaty would strengthen the African voice at the court, as well as provide a timely reminder to the international community of their commitment to international justice. The Coalition applauded several promising efforts by the Rwandan government recently, including the active participation of Rwanda at several sessions of the Assembly of States Parties of the ICC.

To date, 121 States worldwide have joined the Rome Statute. As a state party, Rwanda would 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. In addition, it would assume a role in advancing human rights, accountability, justice and an end to impunity for grave crimes in Africa and in the world.

**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; Côte d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; and Libya. The ICC has publicly issued 22 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 Office of the Prosecutor has also made public that it is conducting eight preliminary examinations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea, Mali and Nigeria.*

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

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