



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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Global Coalition Urges Mauritania to Join 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)—today 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 5 June 2012 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 Guatemala's recent accession on 2 April 2012, 121 states have ratified or acceded to the treaty, while 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," said Francis Dako, Coalition 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. There are currently 32 members of the African Union who are also states parties to the Rome Statute. 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.

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; Cote d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; and Libya. 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 prosecutor has also made public that he 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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