

For more information, contact:

In the Philippines: Evelyn Balais-Serrano
Regional Coordinator for Asia-Pacific, Coalition for the ICC
Tel: +632 456 6196 or +632 926 7882
E-mail: serrano@coalitionfortheicc.org

In New York: Michelle Reyes Milk
Outreach Liaison for Asia-Pacific, Coalition for the ICC
Tel: (+) 1 646 465 8520
E-mail: reyes@coalitionfortheicc.org

In The Hague: Oriane Maillet
CICC Head of Communications
Tel: (+31) 70 311 10 82
E-mail: maillet@coalitionfortheicc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1 February 2011

Global Coalition Urges the Philippines to Ratify the Rome Statute Says Joining the ICC should be a Priority to Ensure Accountability

New York, USA/Manila, Philippines – The Coalition for the International Criminal Court—a global network of more than 2,500 non-governmental and civil society organizations—is calling on the Philippines to demonstrate its commitment to international justice and the rule of law by joining the International Criminal Court (ICC). Philippines is the focus of the Coalition’s February 2011 Universal Ratification Campaign (URC), 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 February 2011 sent to Philippine President H.E. Benigno S. Aquino III, the Coalition urged the new Philippine government to prioritize its ratification of the Rome Statute and join the global movement to end impunity. 114 states have acceded to or ratified the treaty, and 139 are signatories.

“Coalition members in the Philippines have great respect for democracy and the rule of law,” said William R. Pace, Convenor of the Coalition. “We believe the new government of the Philippines can advance these principles and continue to set an example nationally and throughout Asia by joining the International Criminal Court.”

The Coalition encouraged the Philippines to heighten its efforts towards ratification of the Rome Statute to ensure that progress made thus far is not lost. Ratifying the treaty would be consistent with the commitment of the government of the Philippines to uphold human rights as is enshrined in the Constitution, and to advance international law as reflected in “*The Philippine Act on Crimes against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and Other Crimes against Humanity*,” adopted on 11 December 2009. President Aquino also reiterated this commitment during the December 2010 commemoration of International Human Rights Day.

“Ratifying the Rome Statute would demonstrate the commitment of the new government of Philippines to uphold justice, human rights and the rule of law,” stressed Loretta Ann P. Rosales, former co-chair of the Philippines Coalition for the International Criminal Court, and currently serving under the Aquino administration as chair of the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines. “We urge President Aquino to facilitate the prompt treatment of the ratification dossier to allow the Philippines to continue its path toward becoming a State Party to the treaty,” she added.

Once the Philippines joins the Court, the under-represented Asia and Pacific region will have a much stronger voice at the ICC, and will be able to participate in a more meaningful manner. Currently, only seven Asian states—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, and Timor-Leste—are ICC members. The Philippines’s ratification will spur other states in the region to join the growing global movement for accountability for the most serious crimes.

As a state party, the Philippines would be able to actively participate in the annual Assembly of States Parties (ASP) - ICC’s governing body - during which states make important decisions in relation to the administration of the Court, including the election of judges and prosecutor. A year from now, six judges, the prosecutor and deputy prosecutor will complete their terms of office and vacate their positions. This will be a very good opportunity for Philippines and other states parties in the region to nominate candidates to these crucial posts to ensure national and regional representation in this new justice mechanism.

Background: *The ICC is the world’s first, permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. With the ratification of Moldova, Bangladesh, Seychelles and Sta. Lucia in 2010, the number of ICC States Parties has reached 114, more than half of the world’s nations. 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 five active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, Sudan; Uganda, and Kenya. The ICC has publicly issued 12 arrest warrants and three summonses to appear. Three trials are ongoing. The Office of the Prosecutor has made public that it is examining at least ten situations on four continents, including Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, South Korea, Nigeria, and Palestine.*

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

###