



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Global Coalition Calls on Rwanda to Join the International Criminal Court**  
*Acceding to the Rome Statute Will Strengthen the Fight Against Impunity for Grave Crimes*

**New York, USA / Bukavu, DRC**—The Coalition for the International Criminal Court today called on Rwanda to demonstrate its commitment to the global fight against impunity by acceding to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)—the world’s first and only permanent international court able to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Rwanda is the focus of the Coalition’s Universal Ratification Campaign (URC) for December 2011, a campaign launched to call upon a different country each month to join the Rome Statute—the ICC’s founding treaty.

In a letter dated 5 December 2011 to Rwandan President H.E. Mr. Paul Kagame, 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—urged the government of Rwanda to move forward with the accession process of the Rome Statute.

“Rwanda is an example of an African state that has fought against impunity for international crimes committed on its territory in 1994, and it is thus our hope that

the government of Rwanda will advance the process of ratification of the Rome Statute,” said Armel Luhiriri, CICC francophone Africa situations liaison. “33 African countries have thrown their support behind the Court and work actively to make it live up to the world’s expectations of bringing justice to the victims of atrocities. Rwanda should no longer be part of the shrinking minority of African states outside of the ICC system. Instead, we call on Rwanda to take this step to ensure that grave crimes never again occur in Rwanda, or that if they do, justice will be served.”

The ICC’s treaty came into effect in 2002. Its jurisdiction is not retroactive. The Court recognizes that states have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute international crimes. When states are unable or unwilling to do so, the ICC can step in.

“By acceding to the Rome Statute, the Rwandan government would be taking a concrete step in demonstrating its commitment to fighting impunity for grave crimes in Rwanda and globally,” said Mr. Job Nzovu Ruzage, executive director of Human Rights First Rwanda Association. “We have taken important steps in rebuilding our state and it is time to make this concrete commitment

To date, 120 states worldwide have joined the Rome Statute, Cape Verde, Moldova, the Philippines, and Vanuatu being the most recent. Rwandan officials have previously attended sessions of the annual Assembly of States Parties (ASP)—the ICC’s governing body—and also participated in the 2010 Review Conference of the Rome Statute.

After accession, Rwanda would be able to participate at the ASP as a state party, during which important decisions are made in relation to the administration of the Court, including the election of judges and other Court officials.

**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 19 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. Three trials are ongoing. The ICC prosecutor has also made public that it is examining eight situations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea, Nigeria and Palestine.*

*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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