



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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Global Coalition urges the Republic of Togo to Accede to the Rome Statute

Togo should facilitate a rapid entry into the ICC through accession

New York—The Coalition for the International Criminal Court today called upon the Republic of Togo 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 the Republic of Togo as the focus of its January 2013 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.

In a letter dated 17 January 2013 to President **Faure Gnassingbe**, the Coalition urged the Republic of Togo to demonstrate its commitment to international justice and the rule of law by acceding to the Rome Statute.

"Togo is the only West African country that never signed the Rome Statute," said Francis Dako, the Coalition's Africa regional coordinator. "We therefore urge the government to summon the necessary political will and take the historic step of joining the majority of the world's nations that have ratified the Rome Statute."

Togo's accession to the treaty would strengthen the African voice at the court, as well as provide a reminder to the international community and the people of Togo that the government is committed to justice. The Coalition commends Togo's participation as an observer at the ICC's Assembly of States Parties (ASP) meetings. Togo's commitment to attending these sessions illustrates their commitment to the process of international justice.

Additionally, the Togolese national political dialogue has focused on the fight against impunity in past years, notably through the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission in 2009, which investigated acts of political violence committed between 1958 and 2005 and proposed measures of reparations for victims. This dialogue has been aimed at finding a lasting solution to past instability and has created a well-formed awareness of the need to end impunity.

There have been preliminary discussions by senior officials at the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs regarding the merits and implications of accession. However, there is a lack of political will regarding Togo's accession since many misconceptions of the ICC still remain. As there are no legal impediments, the Coalition encourages the Togolese government to form a ministerial committee to discuss the possibility of beginning the accession process.

"Togo is surrounded by states that are already states party to the ICC. We ask Togo to take steps now to join its neighbors in embracing the Court so that we are one step closer to the shared goal of universal acceptance of the Court," said Brigitte Suhr, the Coalition's director of regional programs. "We know of no legal impediment in Togo that could hamper accession and call on Togo to move forward quickly."

To date, 121 states worldwide have joined the Rome Statute. As a state party, the Republic of Togo would actively participate in a more significant manner in the annual ASP sessions, 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 eight investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; Cote d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; Libya; and Mali. 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 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 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

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