

PRESS RELEASE

African states should reaffirm their commitment to uphold victims' rights to justice

On the occasion of the meeting of African States Parties in preparation of the Review Conference of the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) which will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 3-6 November, FIDH urges African States Parties to the ICC Statute to reaffirm their commitment to fight against impunity for the most heinous crimes through their unconditional support to the ICC.

FIDH welcomes the African States meeting, and calls upon States to ensure that discussions aim at guaranteeing a successful ICC Review Conference in 2010. FIDH believes that this is an excellent opportunity for African States Parties to the ICC to rectify the negative message that the African Union (AU) declaration on non-cooperation sent regarding their obligations towards the ICC.

FIDH recalls that the AU declaration adopted last July 2009 at the AU summit disregards African States Parties international obligations, particularly the obligation to cooperate with the decisions of a Court they voluntarily created by adopting, signing and ratifying the Statute of the ICC.

Discussions at the Addis Ababa meeting should acknowledge the need to fully respect the integrity and independence of the ICC and to uphold key principles of its Statute, in particular the principle that no-one is above the law and that the Court can prosecute anyone regardless of their official capacity.

"The ICC is bringing justice to millions of African victims, whose calls for justice and redress cannot be addressed by their national judicial system" said Souhayr Belhassen, President of the FIDH. The Court is acting in Africa because crimes which are among the most serious have been committed on the continent, and also more important because it has been invited to act by three African States themselves and at the Security Council's request.

The ICC Review Conference will be an excellent opportunity for States to reaffirm their commitment to fight against impunity, first and foremost, at the national level through fair and independent trials, and, second, at the ICC, when national jurisdiction are unwilling or unable to act. Discussions at the upcoming meeting in Addis Ababa will, therefore, be key to developing a common African position to achieve that goal.

FIDH urges African states parties to the ICC to remain steadfast to a fair and effective ICC and refrain for adopting any measure -legal or political- which might undermine the effective functioning of the Court.

Finally, FIDH recognizes that the role of AU is decisive to achieve an effective functioning of the ICC and, therefore, takes the opportunity to urge the AU to conclude its cooperation agreement with the Court.

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