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CROATIA BECOMES FIRST EASTERN EUROPEAN STATE TO RATIFY TREATY TO ESTABLISH INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

UNITED NATIONS, May 21, 2001 – Today, Croatia became the first Eastern European state and the thirty-second country globally to complete the process of ratifying the treaty to establish a permanent International Criminal Court, the Coalition for an International Criminal Court announced. The Court will bring to justice individuals who commit genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and it will be formally established following the 60th ratification.

Upon depositing the instrument of ratification of this historic treaty, Ambassador Ivan Simonovic of the Croatian Mission to the United Nations commented, "We are now in the second phase of ratifications leading up to the establishment of the ICC. Croatia has become the first country to ratify the Rome Statute which has first hand experience with an international criminal tribunal. We believe a significant event which would encourage more states to speed up their ratification efforts would be the surrender of Slobodan Milosevic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. This would be proof that the international community is committed to international justice."

Mr. William Pace, Convenor of the Coalition for an International Criminal Court applauded Croatia for its determined efforts to become one of the first 60 states party to the treaty. "Croatia's ratification is important because it represents the first government from Eastern Europe, and the first nation from the Former Yugoslavia, to complete ratification of the Rome Statute. It is a further confirmation that nations from every region and legal system will be among those establishing the ICC next year."

The Rome Statute, the treaty which establishes the International Criminal Court, will enter into force once 60 states have ratified it. To date, 32 states have completed ratification, the last three, Croatia, Paraguay and Andorra occurred within as many weeks. Ms. Iruñe Aguirrezabal, the European Coordinator for the Coalition stated, "Croatia's ratification shows an ever increasing European consensus for the prompt establishment of the ICC. The fact that a former Yugoslav republic has ratified this Statute shows that countries which have experienced violence recognize the role of international justice to strengthen peace and bring about reconciliation."