

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

NIGERIA JOINS GROWING NUMBER OF AFRICAN NATIONS IN SUPPORT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

UNITED NATIONS, September 28, 2001 - Nigeria ratified the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court (ICC) yesterday, becoming the 39th State Party of the 60 needed for the Court to be established. The ICC will be the first permanent international criminal court able to try individuals for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"African nations have been at the forefront of the effort to establish this Court," said William Pace, Convenor of the 1000-member NGO Coalition for the ICC. "There would not be a treaty without the support of Africa. They have also been leading the way in completing the ratification process at the national level. The announcement of the ratification of Nigeria, a key country in the region, further reinforces the continued leadership and commitment from African nations to address serious crimes of international concern through justice mechanisms."

The 8th Preparatory Commission for the ICC is currently being held at the United Nations (September 26 - October 5), which will finalize legal, administrative and logistical details of the future ICC. Despite the cancellation or postponement of most UN meetings after the September 11th attacks, the ICC meetings went ahead on schedule. This is reportedly due in large part to the symbolic nature of the meetings, as the future ICC will be able to address the kinds of crimes committed on September 11th. The Court is expected to begin functioning in one to two years.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan emphasized the support of the United Nations for the establishment of the Court at a reception organized by the Coalition on 27 September. Congratulating the young people in attendance, the Secretary General said, "to be so determined to ensure that we have a world based on the rule of law at the national and international level is very encouraging." He also commented that "the climate has changed somewhat since the 11th of September and I think we are going to get much more support [for the ICC] that we had not counted on."

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court was formed in 1995 to advocate for the creation of a fair, effective and independent International Criminal Court. It brings together a broad-based network of over 1000 non-governmental organizations and international law experts from every region of the world to foster awareness of and support for the Court.