

8 April 2002

Call for Action on the ICC

Dear Friends:

A new institution to curb crimes against humanity is about to be born. An international criminal court to bring to justice those who plan or perpetrate massive atrocities against civilians will be celebrated at the United Nations on Thursday, April 11, 2002, as ratification by over 60 nations brings the new court into existence. It is a historic milestone.

Unfortunately, despite American leadership in establishing the International Military Tribunal and related criminal courts at Nuremberg and elsewhere, and our espousal of equal justice under law, the United States stands on the sidelines, insisting that under no circumstances will it accept a foreign tribunal with authority to try any U.S. nationals.

U.S. intransigence disappoints many allies, including the entire European Community, Canada and Great Britain, and flies in the face of recommendations by some of America's most respected legal experts. Veiled threats that the U.S. will somehow erase its signature from the treaty for the Court evokes ridicule, as does the determined effort by conservative congressmen to derail the court by imposing U.S. sanctions against nations that support the new court. Such unparalleled and bellicose manifestations of unilateralism betray our ideals and undermine our prestige in the world.

The Rome Treaty, on which the Court's statute is based, can only be ratified after two-thirds of U.S. Senators give their consent. Americans will have ample time to debate the merits of the new court, and to see how it works. Remaining aloof and sulking, or trying to sabotage the court, can only be counterproductive and demean our stature as a world leader supporting the rule of law.

Let all join in celebrating the historic step forward in the slow march toward civilization so that the true voice of America is heard loud and clear.

Good luck and best wishes to all.

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Benjamin B. Ferencz, a former Nuremberg war crimes prosecutor. J.D. Harvard, 1943

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