



**Coalition
for the
International
Criminal Court**

For more information, contact:
In New York: Sally Eberhardt tel: (+)1.212.687.2863, x. 17
email : eberhardt@iccnnow.org
In Nigeria: Benson Chinedu Olugbuo
tel: (+)234.9.413.2204/(+)234.803.615.6081
email: olugbuo@iccnnow.org
www.iccnnow.org

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Ethiopia Should Accede to International Criminal Court Treaty as Soon as Possible

Ethiopia's Accession is Crucial as ICC Moves Forward with Sudanese, Ugandan and Congolese Cases

(New York, 10 June 2005) – An international coalition of more than 2,000 non-governmental and civil society organizations that support the International Criminal Court (ICC) this week called for Ethiopia to accede to the Rome Statute of the ICC – the treaty that created the first permanent global court capable of trying individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes when national courts are unable or unwilling to do so.

In a letter sent to Ethiopian Foreign Minister Ato Seyoum Mesfin in Addis Ababa, the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) urged Ethiopia to consider accession to the ICC treaty as soon as possible given that the ICC is moving forward with its first three cases, all on the African continent. As the CICC letter noted, “At a time when the ICC is beginning its important work to end impunity for some of the world’s worst atrocities with its first cases in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan, Ethiopia’s accession would signal Ethiopia’s support for this new and vital system of international justice.”

Given both the 31 March 2005 United Nations Security Council referral to the ICC of the Darfur situation in Sudan – a next-door neighbor to Ethiopia –and Ethiopia’s other close neighbor, Kenya’s, ratification of the ICC treaty, also in March 2005, Ethiopian accession could offer both momentum to security-building in East Africa and a beacon of hope for peaceful solutions to on-going hostilities there.

In addition, the CICC letter also offered praise to Ethiopia for _____. The ever-growing worldwide movement behind the Court now includes the majority of countries around the globe – 99 countries to date – that have ratified or acceded to the ICC’s treaty. With the historic milestone of 100 States Parties to the ICC just within reach, Ethiopia’s accession now would build on the African Union’s growing support for the Rome Statute and, especially given Ethiopia’s role in serving as the headquarters of the African Union, firmly link Ethiopia with the majority of African countries – which, following Kenya’s ratification, now total 27 – who have become party to this crucial global treaty.

In just the past nine months, the CICC has traveled twice to Ethiopia – in December 2004 and April 2005 – in order to discuss in depth ICC accession with key figures in the Ethiopian government, members of Ethiopian NGOs and African Union officials based in Addis Ababa. Both of these missions proved highly encouraging, with Ethiopian officials_____

“Ethiopian accession to the ICC treaty now would offer build on the momentum from Kenya’s March 2005 ICC ratification and would help solidify the African continent’s growing commitment to end impunity and promote international justice in truly concrete ways,” said William Pace, Convenor of the CICC based in New York.

The ICC is the first permanent global criminal court. It was established in The Hague, the Netherlands on 1 July 2002 when its treaty entered into force. The court does not have jurisdiction over any crimes prior to that date. The ICC’s geographic jurisdiction extends over the territories and nationals of the 99 countries that have ratified or acceded to its treaty. The Court may also have jurisdiction in situations referred by the UN Security Council. In accordance with the court’s “complementarity” principle, however, the ICC will only act when national courts have been unable or unwilling to do so. The ICC announced the launch of formal investigations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda in June and July 2004 respectively and was referred the situation in Darfur, Sudan on 31 March 2005 by the UN Security Council.