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## **FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

### **CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS CALL ON MAURITANIA TO ACCEDE TO THE ICC TREATY NOW Global Coalition Urges Mauritania to Demonstrate Real Commitment to International Justice**

(New York, 9 November 2006) – The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC), an international coalition of more than 2,000 non-governmental and civil society organizations - today called upon the Mauritanian government to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to demonstrate its commitment to international justice and the rule of law. In a letter sent to Mauritanian President His Excellency Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, the CICC urges Mauritania to prioritize its accession to the Rome Statute – the treaty that created the first permanent global court capable of trying individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Recent ratification of key international human rights instruments by the Mauritanian government – including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – provides hope that the accession to the Rome Statute may be taken seriously in the near future.

Commenting on Mauritania's possible accession, Francis Dako, CICC's Francophone Africa Coordinator, said: "This accession by Mauritania will confirm the general commitment of the Transitional Regime to build a new nation based on the rule of law. The accession will be an essential instrument in both the fight to stop the commission of potential war crimes and the global struggle to fight impunity which has been so damaging to Mauritania's image for so long."

With the support of the CICC, Mauritanian civil society organizations interested in international justice and the International Criminal Court plan to establish a National Coalition for the ICC in Mauritania in the near future. Meanwhile, African countries continue to show their support for ICC. On 1 November 2006, the Republic of Chad deposited its ICC ratification, bringing the number of ICC States Parties to 104, including 29 States Parties from Africa.

The ICC is currently investigating cases in Darfur, Sudan; the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and Uganda. The Court unsealed its first arrest warrants for five top leaders of the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) on 13 October 2005. On 17 March 2006, the ICC

unsealed its arrest warrant for Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, leader of the political and military movement, the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) and also announced that Mr. Lubanga had been arrested and transferred to The Hague. Mr. Lubanga is alleged to have been involved in forcefully enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 and using them to participate actively in hostilities in the DRC. The first hearing to assess the charges against Mr. Lubanga was held today (9 November) in The Hague.

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**About the CICC Universal Ratification Campaign**

Each month, CICC members select a country on which to focus efforts to promote ratification. Some recent examples of ICC ratification and accession successes include Chad's ratification of the ICC treaty earlier this month following the CICC's November 2005 campaign on Chad and Kenya ratification which came just three months after the CICC's January 2005 Kenya ratification campaign on Kenya. For additional information, please visit the CICC online at [www.iccnw.org](http://www.iccnw.org)