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Global Coalition Calls on Nicaragua to Ratify International Criminal Court Treaty *Nicaragua's Ratification would Unite Americas Region in the Fight against Impunity*

(New York, 1 April 2005) – In a letter sent today to Nicaraguan Minister of Foreign Relations Norman Caldera, the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) – an international coalition of more than 2,000 non-governmental and civil society organizations that support the International Criminal Court (ICC) – called on Nicaragua to ratify 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. In their letter, the CICC urges Nicaragua to join its neighbors, including Belize, Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama who all joined the ICC between 2000 and 2002, by ratifying the ICC treaty as soon as possible in 2005.

In the Americas, a region which has been affected by serious human rights violations and dictatorships, government support for the ICC has been significant, with many States of the region actively advocating for the ICC prior to and after the adoption of the Rome Statute. Of the 18 Latin American States, only 5 have not yet ratified the Rome Statute, and in the Caribbean, half of all CARICOM Member States have already become States Parties to the Court. Around the world, 27 of the 53 countries that make up the African Union are ICC States Parties and the whole of the European Union with the exception of the Czech Republic is also State Party to the Court. Increased support from the Central America now would consolidate the whole of the Americas as a region committed to the fight against impunity.

In 2003, the Honorable Ambassador Oswaldo de Rivero, Permanent Representative of Peru, spoke on the behalf of the 19 countries that comprise the Rio Group (including Nicaragua) emphasizing their support for the ICC: “The international community needs international law. We have the collective obligation to fight the crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Therefore the relevance of the International Criminal Court [is that it can] confront these crimes that constitute the gravest danger to human beings”.

Commenting on the need for an increase in regional ratifications, CICC Coordinator for Latin American and the Caribbean Paulina Vega-Gonzalez said, “The CICC strongly believes that Nicaragua plays a crucial role in the region, particularly in Central America. The International Criminal Court is a vital tool that will ensure that the most serious violations of human rights are brought to justice and with increased ratifications in the Americas, the region will have a stronger voice in the decision-making processes of the ICC. Now that ICC States Parties number 98, we hope to see the Republic of Nicaragua join the Court becoming part of the historic count of 100 States Parties around the world this year.”

Each month, CICC members select a country on which to focus ICC ratification efforts. Principle organizers of the international campaign are members of the Coalition of the International Criminal Court (CICC) including: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Parliamentarians for Global Action and national human rights groups within Nicaragua. CICC ratification targets over the past 6 months have included: Laos, Kenya, Turkey, Dominican Republic, and Morocco.

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Notes for Editors:

1. The ICC is the world's first permanent global criminal court.
2. The ICC was established in The Hague, the Netherlands on 1 July 2002 when its treaty entered into force. The ICC does not have jurisdiction over any crimes prior to that date.
3. The ICC's geographic jurisdiction extends over the territories and nationals of the 98 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.
4. The Court is currently investigating cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. The Court is also considering 6 other situations on 4 continents.

For more information, please see the CICC's website at www.iccnw.org or contact the CICC team members above.