

Press Release

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CAMBODIA – 1ST ASEAN COUNTRY TO RATIFY INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT TREATY

Cambodia's national assembly has approved the ICC ratification bill in its session yesterday. With the senate's concurrence and the King's signature, Cambodia will be the first country in the ASEAN and South Asia to ratify the Rome treaty creating the International Criminal Court.

With already 47 out of 60 required ratifications to create the court, and with more and more commitments from governments to ratify soon, it is predicted that the court, to be established in the Netherlands will become a reality within the next year.

The Rome Statute, adopted by 120 countries in 1998 in Rome will be the first permanent institution that will try persons for most serious crimes under international law: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.

“This is a landmark decision, a pioneering one for the campaign for ratification in the region.” says Somchai Homlaor, secretary-general of Bangkok-based Forum-Asia, the focal point for the campaign for ratification in the ASEAN of the global network, the Coalition for an International Criminal Court. “It is hoped that other countries in the Asian region realizes the significance of ratifying the Rome treaty and follow Cambodia's bold move to be among the first 60 countries in the assembly of state parties that will be convened after the 60th ratification. With Cambodia's similar move to set up a national tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge leaders for the atrocities committed from 1975 to 1979, its latest recognition of ICC puts it at the rank of those nations striving to put an end to impunity and making the rule of law and justice prevail.”

Together with its network members in Cambodia, ADHOC and LICADHO and other members within the Asian Network for an International Criminal Court (ANICC) and with support from various agencies including the European Union, the Norwegian Embassy, Open Society Institute, Ford Foundation and others, they paved the way for this initial yet major success in Cambodia.

Cambodia was the second country to sign after Thailand and later followed by the Philippines last year. 139 countries have signed since its adoption in 1998, 10 of which are in Asia. In the entire region, only two so far have ratified, Tajikistan and Cambodia. Others that signed were Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Bangladesh, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

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