EUROPEAN SUPPORT CRUCIAL FOR INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING IN BRUSSELS URGES STATES TO SHOW GREATER COMMITMENT TO ENDING IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Brussels—European governments should show greater support for justice for victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes by joining the International Criminal Court (ICC) and promoting the fight against impunity in the region, the Coalition for the ICC said today.

During a high-level strategy meeting in Brussels organized by the Coalition, more than 30 representatives from national and international civil society organizations in Europe agreed upon strategies to bolster the fight against impunity for crimes under international law.

With 42 states parties, Europe includes some of the Court’s staunchest supporters, many of whom played a crucial role in its establishment. However, 12 states have yet to ratify the Rome Statute, the Court’s founding treaty. These include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Holy See, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Monaco, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

“While all European Union member states have joined the ICC, Eastern Europe and Central Asia remain sorely under-represented,” said William Pace, convenor of the Coalition for the ICC. “The last European state to join was Moldova in 2010. Six of the 12 states yet to join have actually signed the ICC treaty and have thus committed to formalizing their membership in the future,” Pace continued. “All now need to take the necessary steps to ensure universal support for ending impunity by joining the Court without delay.”

“As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Russia should set an example and join the 122 other ICC member states,” said Olga Sadovskaya of the Russian Interregional Non-governmental Organization, Committee Against Torture. “Politics has no place in the quest for justice, only a universal International Criminal Court working in cooperation with reinforced national justice systems will be able to bring to account the perpetrators of these terrible crimes.”

During the meeting, which featured a dedicated strategy session with ICC President Sang-Hyun Song, participants agreed to ramp up national and regional campaigns for the ratification and implementation of the Rome Statute, increase general awareness of the ICC while correcting misinformation and to build the capacity of stakeholders—including government officials, parliamentarians, civil society and the media—to advocate for and support international justice.

“Europe itself is sadly no stranger to these crimes, having been victim, witness and perpetrator to many atrocities over the course of the past century. With first-hand experience of these sufferings, our members highlighted the need for the judges and prosecutors of the ICC to implement the lessons learned from 20 years of ad hoc tribunals, special courts and national jurisdictions,” said Pace.

“Ending impunity for crimes under international law aims to address not only the horrors of the past, but also to protect and preserve our present and future,” said Maja Micic of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Serbia. “In the Balkans we still struggle to ensure that...
each and every victim has access to justice and redress,” Micic continued. “The fact that there is now a permanent court to address mass human rights violations is a remarkable step forward, but it will need the continued support of all states for it to bring solace to victims.”

The participants, who all actively work to promote justice at home and abroad, also made recommendations to European states, EU institutions and other regional and international organizations, as well as the ICC. The importance of all states to improve their cooperation with the ICC – in the execution of arrest warrants, the protection of victims and witnesses, the collection and sharing of evidence – was highlighted.

“European governments should show greater leadership in supporting justice for victims of the world’s most outrageous atrocities by promoting the fight against impunity at home and around the world” said Simon Foreman, chair of the French Coalition for the ICC. “France, as one of the founding members of the Court, should ensure that it has the resources necessary to fulfill its mandate in a robust, fair, effective and transparent manner.”

For more information on the Coalition’s campaign in the Europe region, visit: http://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/?mod=region&idureg=10

BACKGROUND: The ICC is the world’s first permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Central to the Court’s mandate is the principle of complementarity, which holds that the Court will only intervene if national legal systems are unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. There are currently eight investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; Côte d’Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; Libya; and Mali. The ICC has publicly issued 22 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. The Court issued a judgment in its first trial on 14 March 2012. Two other trials are ongoing.

The ICC Office of the Prosecutor has also made public that it is conducting eight preliminary examinations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, Comoros (in relation to the events of May 2010 on the vessel “Mavi Marmara”), Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea and Nigeria. The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries working in partnership to strengthen international cooperation with the ICC; ensure that the Court is fair, effective and independent; make justice both visible and universal; and advance stronger national laws that deliver justice to victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. www.coalitionfortheicc.org

Experts from human rights organizations members of the Coalition are available for background information and comment. Contact: communications@coalitionfortheicc.org