



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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GLOBAL COALITION CALLS ON SWAZILAND TO JOIN ICC

Says Accession is Next Step in Demonstrating Government Support for Human Rights

New York, USA – The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)—a global network of more than 2,500 civil society organizations—today called on the Kingdom of Swaziland to accede to the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, without delay. Swaziland is the May 2008 target for the Coalition’s Universal Ratification Campaign (URC), which each month calls upon a different country to join the Court.

In a letter dated 2 May 2008 to H.M. King Mswati III and Prime Minister Absalom Thembu Dlamini, the CICC urged Swaziland to prioritize its accession to the Rome Statute. The letter noted that during the Sixth Committee meeting of the 57th UN General Assembly in October 2002 the government itself said the ICC is “one of the most promising opportunities to promote accountability and human security, in whose prospects lies the promise of universal justice and an end to impunity which has prevailed for so long.” The Coalition calls on the government of Swaziland to act on its expressed support for the ICC.

“This is a historic year that marks the tenth anniversary of the Rome Statute, which was adopted by 120 nations on 17 July 1998,” said Benson Chinedu Olugbuo, the CICC Anglophone Africa coordinator. “Now is the time for Swaziland – the only remaining monarchy in sub-Saharan Africa – to show its solidarity with the 30 other African states that have joined this Court.”

With Madagascar’s ratification of the Statute on 14 March 2008, Africa continues to have the highest regional representation at the Court. To date, more than half of the world—106 countries—has joined the ICC. The ICC is the first permanent international court capable of trying individuals accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Central to the Court’s mandate is the principle of complementarity, which holds that the Court will only have jurisdiction if national legal systems are unable or unwilling to act.

In the Coalition’s letter to King Mswati III, it commended the government for its accession to the UN Convention Against Torture and its more recent signature of the UN Convention for the

Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance—two indications of Swaziland’s commitment to deterring the perpetrators of serious crimes.

“Accession to the Rome Statute would be a natural next step for Swaziland,” said Olugbuo. “We call on the government to demonstrate that justice for victims of serious crimes is of paramount national and international political importance.” The CICC Anglophone Africa Coordinator will meet with government officials early this month to advocate for the country’s accession to the Rome Statute.

Brigitte Suhr, CICC Director of Regional Programs, said that “Swaziland’s accession will lend an additional supporting voice to the ICC within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union. It will help make the case for greater African cooperation with the ICC at a time when state cooperation with the Court is vital for its effective judicial functioning.”

There are currently four active investigations before the Court: Uganda; the Democratic Republic of Congo; Darfur, Sudan; and the Central African Republic. The Court also has several situations under analysis, including in Colombia and Cote d’Ivoire. It has issued arrest warrants in three out of the four situations under investigation.

The April 2008 target for the Coalition’s Universal Ratification Campaign was Morocco, which will remain a target in May 2008, along with Swaziland.

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