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Global Justice Coalition Welcomes Advances in the Criminal Law Reform in the Democratic Republic of Congo

New York, USA – The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) – a global network of more than 2,500 non-governmental and civil society organizations advocating for justice – welcomes the ongoing national parliamentary debates on the DRC’s draft law criminalizing grave crimes.

“The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court contains modernized definitions of crimes and general legal principles that enshrine high standards of due process,” said Francis Dako, CICC Africa Coordinator. “Implementing Rome Statute obligations into national legislation thus ensures more robust national criminal law, which is essential to the fight against impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

On 4 November 2010, following a heated debate on the law, a simple majority of Members of Parliament declared it admissible. This vote is the first crucial step before the law can be adopted by the plenary. In accordance with Congolese law, the implementation law will now be transmitted to the Commission Politique Administrative Juridique (PAJ) in the National Assembly for further deliberation.

Over the years, the Coalition has steadfastly committed itself to advocating for the incorporation of Rome Statute crimes into DRC national legislation as a key step forward in creating a national justice system better able to proceed with investigations and prosecutions of grave crimes. In partnership with members in the DRC, the Coalition has supported initiatives such as workshops and awareness-building on the Rome Statute in an effort to accelerate the implementation process.
“The Coalition commends the past and ongoing efforts of certain DRC parliamentarians, in particular members of Parliamentarian for Global Action (PGA), to ensure the implementation of the Rome Statute into national law,” said Dako. “We further encourage all actors involved in the process, including international experts and organizations providing professional assistance, to firmly continue to work for the adoption of the implementation law.”

Once enacted, the law would create a path for the DRC to establish a national Fund for Victims and it would allow national courts to prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Background:

114 countries have joined the ICC, which 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 unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of crimes contained in the Statute. To date, the ICC has opened investigations in five situations: the Central African Republic; Darfur, Sudan; Uganda; Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya and it has publicly issued twelve arrest warrants and three summonses to appear. The ICC Office of the Prosecutor has made public that it is examining at least eight situations on four continents, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, Guinea and Palestine.

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC and improved access to justice for victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. For additional information and related statements you may refer to the Coalition's website at www.coalitionfortheicc.org

Important notice: The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) is a civil society network in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC and improved access to justice for victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Coalition as a whole, and its secretariat, does not endorse or promote specific investigations or prosecutions or take a position on situations before the ICC. However, individual CICC members may endorse referrals, provide legal and other support on investigations, or develop partnerships with local and other organizations in the course of their efforts.

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