18 July 2001

AI Index: EUR 35/001/2001- News Service Nr. 124

Netherlands: Ratification of Rome Statute -- a vital step towards establishing International Criminal Court

The Netherlands' ratification of the Rome Statute is a milestone in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, Amnesty International said today, after the Netherlands became the 37th state to ratify the Statute.

"As the Netherlands is set to be the host state for the Court's headquarters, this vital ratification paves the way for a prompt entry into force of the Statute and for the establishment of the Court."

"The international community is now one step closer to a permanent International Criminal Court," Amnesty International said.

The Netherlands' ratification came on 17 July 2001, the third anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute. The Statute will enter into force and the Court can be established after 60 states have ratified.

"Now that the Netherlands has ratified, the Dutch government should ensure that national legislation providing for full and effective cooperation with the Court, is enacted before the 60th ratification," Amnesty International said, adding that the 60th ratification is expected to take place earlier than many had predicted, possibly in the next six to 12 months.

Background

The Rome Statute was adopted on 17 July 1998 at the conclusion of a diplomatic conference in Rome. 120 of the 148 countries present voted in favour of the Rome Statute. Only seven countries voted against it, and 21 abstained.

The Statute provides for the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court to prosecute the worst crimes known to humanity including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Once it has been established, the Court will not be a substitute for national courts which are able and willing to fulfil their responsibilities. Indeed, as the Preamble of the Rome Statute makes clear, national courts have the primary responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for such crimes. The Court will exercise its jurisdiction *only* when countries fail to carry out their responsibilities under international law. The very existence of the Court will act as a catalyst to inspire national legal systems to fulfil their duties and will act as a deterrent for those planning to commit such crimes.

Article 3 of the Rome Statute provides that the headquarters of the Court shall be established in The Hague. The Court my sit elsewhere, when it considers it desirable.

For further information on the International Criminal Court see Amnesty International's Fact Sheets on the International Criminal Court included in Amnesty International's website: www.amnesty.org (Note: To find these documents search for "International Criminal Court")

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