



Ref.: EUR 56/003/2003

Mrs. Nino Burjanadze
Speaker of Parliament
Georgia
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11 June 2003

Dear Mrs Nino Burjanadze,

Open letter urging ratification of the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court

On 16 June this month, the first Prosecutor of the new International Criminal Court, Mr Luis Moreno Ocampo, will take office at the seat of the Court in the Hague. The occasion will mark the start of a new system of international justice designed to end impunity for the worst crimes known to humanity – genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. I am writing to urge you to support Georgia's ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as soon as possible, so that it can join the 90 states – nearly half of the international community - that have already done so in ensuring the success of the Court.

In the last century, despite millions of victims of the genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, countries largely failed to fulfil their responsibilities to bring those responsible to justice. The result has been that perpetrators of these crimes have acted in the knowledge that it is extremely unlikely that they will be held accountable and victims have been denied justice and reparation.

On 17 July 1998, the international community took a major step towards ending impunity by adopting the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute). The Rome Statute provides for the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court to bring to justice people accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes as the most serious crimes under international law. The Court will only act when national courts are unable or unwilling to do so.

Georgia played an important role in the drafting of the Rome Statute during the Rome Conference, by supporting its adoption and signing the Statute on 18 July 1998, demonstrating its intention to ratify. Amnesty International welcomes reports that major progress has been made towards ratification in recent months and that a draft legislative package has been submitted to parliament, that if approved would allow Georgia to ratify in the very near future.

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The International Criminal Court offers hope for a world where the most horrific crimes cannot be committed with impunity. Amnesty International is confident that in its first years, the Court will act justly, fairly and effectively towards this goal and that it will prove unfounded the fears of those that remain concerned about the Court. Its success is dependent on support from as many states as possible to ensure it has the widest possible jurisdiction and international cooperation to perform its tasks. I hope you will strongly support Georgia's ratification as soon as possible, followed by prompt enactment of effective implementing legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Macpherson
Director, International Organizations Branch
International Law and Organizations