



**Pacific Islands Roundtable on the ratification and implementation of the Rome Statute
of the International Criminal Court (ICC)**

Port Vila, Vanuatu

31 May 2019, 09:30 – 18:00

**Hon Ralph Regenvanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and
External Trade of Vanuatu, to address the Opening Session**

Honorable Speaker, honorable members of Parliaments and Governments, experts and academics,

- It is my sincere pleasure to welcome you at this important meeting in our capital to discuss international criminal justice, the International Criminal Court, and the Rome Statute system. This event serves to advance the prospects of our region to join the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of this important institution which serves as the last resort to try crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and potentially, also crimes of aggression. Particularly relevant for our region, it also penalises intentional attacks causing widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment committed in the context of international armed conflict.
- Out of the 16 independent and self-governing states that comprise the Pacific Islands Forum, eight are states parties to the Rome Statute, namely Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Samoa and, I am proud to say, Vanuatu as of December 2011. The remaining eight, namely Kiribati, Micronesia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, The Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu are not parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC yet.
- So, why is it important to join the ICC? There is a wide array of benefits of supporting this system of international justice.
- The ICC prevents and provides protection and reparations against the gravest violations of basic human rights known to humankind committed against our citizens or on our territories. Joining the ICC increases the chances of protection of the Court in the face of the commission of international crimes, while deterring ongoing violence, preventing future crimes and building a peaceful and just future.
- Additionally, the accession to the Rome Statute sends a clear message to the international community of a country's own commitment to international justice and the fight against impunity.

- Even more so, the domestic implementation of the Rome Statute helps strengthen our own national legal systems.
- Membership also allows States to shape the development of international criminal justice and law. It allows states to participate in a multilateral forum that allows for a strong participation of States Parties in elections and decision- making of the ICC Assembly of States Parties (ASP) on key issues relating to international criminal law. In addition, it allows to put forward candidates for various elected positions in the ASP and the ICC.
- Today, multilateralism is being questioned as an effective tool to resolve global issues. New threats and the evolution of weapons and methods of warfare undermine peace and democratic values. We continue to witness the commission of international crimes and the attempts of perpetrators to evade accountability. Now, more than ever, it is the time for our great region to join this universal system of international justice and take a decisive stand in the word fora. We are very hopeful that the example of my country will inspire all the remaining states that have still not taken this step yet.
- I wish you a fruitful discussion today