



## PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION

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CONTACTS:

Dr. D. Donat Cattin, Prog. Director, PGA  
T: + 1 212 687 7755 (ext. 100)  
T: + 39 333 166 0309 - [donat@pgaction.org](mailto:donat@pgaction.org)

### BAHRAIN TO RATIFY INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC) SOON

#### Legislators meet in Lebanon to advance international justice and accountability

*Beirut, May 25, 2006* – At a Round-table discussion on the ICC co-organised by Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) and *Justice Sans Frontières* in Beirut on May 22, the First Deputy Speaker of the Bahrain Parliament **Mr. Abdulhadi Marhoon** MP, called for the “immediate ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC by Bahrain”. This statement provides a strong political backing to last week’s announcement by the Bahrain Dep. Foreign Minister Mr. Al-Khalifa concerning the Cabinet decision to join the new system of international criminal justice. The Chair of Bahrain’s Legal Affairs Committee, **Mr. Yousif Zainal** MP, underscored that “for this commitment to be credible, the Government should table the necessary Bill in Parliament as a matter of priority, before the end of the current legislature”, thus preceding the next political elections to be held between September and November 2006.

The Rome Statute of the ICC entered into force on 1 July 2002 and currently has 100 States Parties. As of today, members of PGA have instrumental in 57 national processes that led to their countries’ ratification. However, as PGA Int’l Councillor **Dr. Ra’ed Qaqish** MP (Jordan) recognised in the opening session of the Conference on Lebanon’s Accession to the ICC Statute held at the Beirut Bar Association on 19-20 May, “Jordan is the only country from the Middle East & South Mediterranean that belongs to the ICC system, and it is necessary to alter this regrettable course of events”. The Legislators’ Round-table event of May 22 was convened with the intention of realizing this goal.

Lawmakers from Lebanon outlined the numerous obstacles to the national process of accession, including constitutional issues, the presence of armed movements on Lebanon’s territories and the often misunderstood relationship between the ICC and the United States. **Mr. Ghassan Moukhayber** MP (Lebanon) said that technical problems can be solved, but “political will must be built”. **Mr. Boutros Harb** MP (Lebanon) presented a comprehensive overview on the Lebanese and regional situation, and concluded that joining the ICC would be beneficial to the civilian population, “All that we need is to protect the civilians, and we must find a *consensus* in Parliament to join the ICC and introduce the definition of crimes against humanity into Lebanese Law”, Mr. Harb, a candidate for the Presidency, said.

PGA’s Councillor **Deputé Mohammed Oudor** (Morocco) expressed confidence in a future decision of Morocco to join the ICC system following the successful experience of the Moroccan Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other reforms undertaken by the Kingdom. Also, “considering the fact that Morocco has already agreed to respect the no-impunity principle by signing the Rome Statute, the Kingdom will not miss an opportunity to reaffirm the stand of Morocco on human rights and the rule of law”, Mr. Oudor affirmed.

PGA will continue to work with lawmakers from Bahrain, Lebanon, Morocco and other countries in the region in their ongoing efforts to secure accession of their respective countries to the ICC, as well as on the effective implementation of the Statute within these countries and Jordan. To this effect, PGA Board Member **Ms. Farah Karimi** MP (Netherlands) observed that the PGA’s *Working Group for the Universality of the ICC in the Middle East and the Mediterranean* shall meet again soon and focus on the most serious issues raised in the Round-table discussion. Concerning Lebanon, Ms. Karimi stressed that “at a time in which it is very important for Lebanon to receive international cooperation to bring to justice the alleged perpetrators of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and other prominent individuals, it is equally important for Lebanon to show its commitment to justice and the rule of law for all victims of the most serious crimes. Such a commitment could be well demonstrated through accession to the Rome Statute as its 101 State Party”.

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#### ***About Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)***

PGA is a network of more than 1300 parliamentarians in 112 countries that, since 1989, has worked in favour of the establishment of a permanent and universal International Criminal Court. PGA members have contributed to the ratification of the Rome Statute by 57 States Parties, including the 100<sup>th</sup> ratification by Mexico. The Convenor of the PGA Int’l Law & Human Rights Program, which includes work on international justice issues generally, is **Sen. Raynell Andreychuk** of Canada. PGA is member of the Steering Committee of the CICC.