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THE COMOROS JOINS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT AS ITS 101ST STATE PARTY

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS JOINS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT AS ITS 102ND PARTY

New York, August 28, 2006 – **The Union of the Comoros** deposited with the United Nations Secretariat its Instrument of Ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 18 August, 2006, thereby becoming the 101st State to adhere to the new system of international criminal justice. The Comoros is the third member of the Arab League to join the ICC. In doing so brings to 28 the number of African nations that are party to the ICC, Africa is the best represented region within the ICC system.

The road towards ratification can be traced to the active and effective leadership of **Dep. Assoumani Youssef Mondoha**, a former diplomat and current Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security at the Comoros National Assembly. In November 2005, Dep. Assoumani attended the *Panel Discussion on the Role of Parliamentarians in the ICC Process* organized by Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) at the IV Assembly of States Parties of the ICC in The Hague. Since then, he has been the prime mover of the ICC process in the Comoros. He submitted several reports to the National Assembly gathering support from other colleagues and increasing discussion on the ICC among civil society and in the press. These activities in turn prompted the transmission of the Rome Statute by the Executive to the Assembly on the 26 of March 2006. Dep. Assoumani's prepared for discussion in Committee the Draft Bill of ratification of the Rome Statute that was unanimously approved by the plenary on June 27, 2006. In his report to the National Assembly, **Dep Assoumani** underscored "the independent and permanent nature of the ICC, which protects the fundamental rights of the accused and the victims through equitable and impartial proceedings". Also, Dep. Assoumani has called on "other Parliamentarians in Members States of the Arab League to take a pro-active role in bring about their countries' contribution to the universality of the ICC".

Dr. Herta Daubler-Gmelin (Germany), MP, Chairperson of the Bundestag Human Rights Committee, who met with Dep. Assoumani in The Hague, stressed the importance of having one more country from the Conference of Islamic States and the Arab League in this new system of international criminal justice that aims at preventing and repressing genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. "The ICC is compatible with all legal traditions thus no region of the world should exclude itself from participating and contributing to this universal system", Daubler-Gmelin said.

Sen. Alain Destexhe (Belgium), President of PGA, emphasized the role of parliamentarians in once more successfully leading a national process that brings about the ratification of the ICC Statute. Also, Sen. Destexhe remarked in Manila where he addressed PGA's *Asian Parliamentarians' Consultation on the ICC* in the Congress of Philippines that "the international community should have prevented the escalation of violence and crimes against humanity in Darfur, Sudan, so now it is about time to put an end to the attacks against the civilians and bring to justice the authors of such crimes."

Dep. Assoumani clarified that the role of the parliamentarians does not end here since as organs of a State Party they have the responsibility to act to enhance the cooperation of African nations and international organizations with the Court, "In addition to consolidating universality of the Court, the current challenge is to mobilize support to secure effective cooperation of States to execute the 5 arrest warrants awaiting in Uganda, and guarantee a space for the conduct of investigations of the Prosecutor in the DRC and Sudan." Dep. Assoumani been invited to present a report of such activities at the "*Consultative Assembly of Parliamentarians for the ICC and the Rule of Law*" (Tokyo, 4-5 December 2006), the main project of the ICC Campaign of PGA.

Saint Kitts & Nevis

In another very positive development, on Tuesday, 22 August 2006, **Saint Kitts & Nevis** formally acceded to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, bringing the total to 102 States Parties. Saint Kitts & Nevis is the 23rd country in the Americas to join the Court.

About PGA

Parliamentarians for Global Action is a network of more than 1300 parliamentarians of 112 countries worldwide that in the past ten years has worked in favor of the establishment of a permanent international criminal court. PGA members have lead, promoted and authored ratification and implementation initiatives of the Rome Statute in 58 out of the 102 State Parties of the ICC, including in some of the more recent States that have now joined the ICC - Kenya, the Dominican Republic and Mexico in 2005 and The Comoros in 2006. PGA is a member of the Steering Committee of the Coalition for the ICC.