

**Press Release: 16.03.2011**

**ICC President builds support for the International Criminal Court during visit to Southeast Asia**

ICC-CPI-20110316-PR642



*ICC President Song delivers keynote address at the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Consultation on The Universality of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court © PGA*

The President of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Judge Sang-Hyun Song of South Korea, concluded an eight-day official trip to Southeast Asia on Sunday 13 March 2011. President Song urged states in the region to consider joining the ICC, the first permanent international court set up to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.

“I was greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm and support for the ICC expressed by a wide variety of stakeholders in Southeast Asia”, President Song said upon his return to The Hague. “There was a real consensus by officials and the civil society that it is time for Asia, which is already a global force in many areas such as economy and technology, to assume a stronger role in the international community’s joint efforts to end impunity for the gravest crimes known to humanity, as an integral element of international peace and security. In particular, I was delighted to learn about prospects of the Philippines, Malaysia and the Maldives moving to join the Rome Statute in the near future”.

The purpose of President Song’s trip was to raise awareness about the ICC and to facilitate informed consultations in countries that may be considering ratification of the Rome Statute. Asia is the least represented region at the ICC, and of the 114 States Parties only two – Cambodia and Timor-Leste – are in Southeast Asia.

**The Philippines**

The first leg of President Song’s trip was Manila, the Philippines. In their meeting on 7 March, the Philippine President Benigno C. Aquino III announced to President Song that

he had signed the instrument of ratification, which would be sent to the Philippine Senate for concurrence. President Song also briefed the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Philippine Senate. The Committee Chair Senator Loren Legarda [a member of PGA] expressed her strong support of the ICC saying, “the ratification of and concurrence to the ICC by the Philippine government is a step in the right direction considering that the Philippines is a thriving and robust democracy. This will strengthen our stand in protecting human rights, including the right to human life and dignity, and will bring a strong message that we will never tolerate impunity.”

During his stay in Manila, President Song addressed a civil society reception and held a lecture on ICC and Asia at the College of Law of the University of the Philippines. He gave several interviews to television and newspapers and participated in a press conference organised by the Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

### Malaysia

President Song next visited Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he held official meetings with Prime Minister Mr. Najib Razak, Minister of Law Mr. Mohamed Nazri, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Richard Riot Jaem and Attorney-General Mr. Ghani Patail. On 9 March, President Song gave a keynote address at the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Consultation on the Universality of the Rome Statute of the ICC, organised by the Malaysian Parliament and Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), an international network of national parliamentarians working to advance peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Minister Nazri, who is also Chair of the PGA Malaysia Organising Committee, announced in his welcoming speech to the Parliamentary Consultation that accession to the Rome Statute would be discussed in the Malaysian Cabinet very soon. "The world events these past two months are evidence of the urgent need for more countries to be part of the ICC ... International justice is one of the most important expenditures a Government can invest in, not only for prevention, but also to help reconcile conflict situations in the world", he said.

The event gathered PGA members and other stakeholders from nine national legislatures and governments in the Asia-Pacific region including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kiribati, the Maldives, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, the Philippines and Vanuatu. Delegates from the Maldives informed the meeting that they would work to de-block the ICC ratification bill from parliamentary stagnation.

During his stay in Kuala Lumpur, President Song gave several media interviews and participated in a press conference in connection with the PGA event. He also used the opportunity to meet with the civil society at a forum hosted by the Malaysian Bar Council, and to give a lecture at the Law Faculty of the University of Malaya.

### Brunei Darussalam

President Song's last destination was Banda Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, where he met on 12 March with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, His Royal Highness

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, who expressed strong interest in the ICC's mandate and activities. President Song also held detailed talks with the Attorney-General Datin Paduka Hajah Hayati Poksdsp Haji Salleh and the Chief Justice Hon. Dato Seri Paduka Haji Kifrawi Dato Paduka Haji Kifli.

President Song gave a briefing about the ICC to senior officials of the Attorney-General's Chambers and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as to members of the Law Society of Brunei Darussalam. His visit was widely reported in the local media.

Promoting the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute will remain a key priority for the remainder of President Song's term in office, with a particular focus on Asia as the most underrepresented region in the ICC. President Song has previously visited Bangladesh, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal and Thailand for this purpose, with Bangladesh ratifying the Rome Statute soon afterwards, in March 2010.

### Background

The ICC is an independent, permanent court that prosecutes persons accused of the most serious crimes of international concern: genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It was established by an international treaty, the Rome Statute, which currently has 114 States Parties.

To date, three States Parties to the Rome Statute – Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic – have self-referred situations occurring in their countries to the Court. The Security Council has referred the situation in Darfur, Sudan, and the Prosecutor was granted authorisation by the Pre-Trial Chamber to open an investigation on his own initiative into the situation in Kenya.

On 26 February 2011, the United Nations Security Council for the first time unanimously decided to refer a situation – that of Libya – to the ICC Prosecutor. On 3 March, the ICC Prosecutor announced that he had opened an investigation into the situation in Libya and on 4 March, the ICC Presidency assigned the situation in Libya to the ICC Pre-trial Chamber.

-----  
**For more information about the ICC**, please contact Jelena Vukasinovic, Associate Legal Outreach Officer, by telephone at: +31 (0)70 515-8094 or by e-mail at: [jelena.vukasinovic@icc-cpi.int](mailto:jelena.vukasinovic@icc-cpi.int).

You can also follow the Court's activities on YouTube and Twitter.

**For more information about the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Consultation** held in Kuala Lumpur 9-10 March 2011, please contact Dr. David Donat Cattin, Director of International Law and Human Rights Programme, Parliamentarians for Global Action, tel. +31.62.331.8581, email [donat@pgaction.org](mailto:donat@pgaction.org).