



PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION (PGA) FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PARLIAMENT OF SURINAME APPROVES ACCESSION TO THE ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Paramaribo/The Hague/New York, 11 July 2008: On July 8, parliamentarians representing all political parties within the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname voted unanimously in favour of the Bill of Accession of Suriname to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). This parliamentary action will enable the Government of Suriname to become a formal State party to the ICC, as committed by President R.R. Venetiaan last October, and in time to celebrate on 17 July 2008 with other 106 States the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute.

The process of joining the ICC has been led by PGA member, **Ms. Ruth Wijdenbosch**, who as then Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly launched in 2004 a multi-party platform to gather support for accession to the Rome Statute. With a recent past dominated by military power since its independence in 1975, the issue of accountability for heinous crimes is a current one in the social and political life of Suriname. However as PGA member in The Netherlands, **Mr. Coşkun Çörüz, MP** expressed *“the force of the sovereign and democratic present of Suriname and the vision of its Parliament for a future based on the rule of law have led to this important event. It is a genuine and splendid cause for celebration in The Netherlands and elsewhere that the aspiration of PGA members like Ruth Wijdenbosch is shared among all sectors of the Surinamese society, as reflected in the unanimous vote to join the Rome Statute,”* Mr. Çörüz remarked.

The vote in favour of the ICC also represents a success in overcoming the challenge posed by the position of the United States concerning the ICC. Suriname receives significant US military assistance and training aid for counter-narcotics and to combat money laundering. Such funds have been threatened since 2003 on the basis of US legislation imposing sanctions in the event Suriname joined the Rome Statute without entering into a Non Surrender Bilateral agreement with the US. *“But under the Rome Statute no individual is above the law, and under international law all nations are equal. Signing a bilateral agreement by which individuals of certain nations found in our territory escape the complementary jurisdiction of the ICC would have been self-defeating”* explained **Ruth Wijdenbosch**, current Chair of the Foreign Affairs and the Defence Committees in the Assembly of Suriname and a member of the PGA Executive Committee.

The stalemate concerning the US sanctions was overcome thanks to the common position of all political forces in Suriname. This position, as proven throughout the region, is a principled and a strategic one that has led to important changes in the US, such as the elimination of the legislation eliminating sanctions on military aid and the policy providing waivers for sanctions for economic support funds. In this regard, *“the success of Surinamese parliamentarians from all political parties is inspiring and gives us hope in achieving full universality of the Rome Statute”* observed **Sen. Carlos Cantero**, Independent Senator and PGA member in Chile, now the only country in South America not yet party to the Rome Statute.

The accession of Suriname to the Rome Statute, to be formalised next week on July 15, when the instrument of accession is deposited with the United Nations, has also a global dimension. As **Sen. Tadashi Inuzuka**, PGA member in Japan explained, *“with heinous crimes happening before our eyes in Darfur such as the recent deadly attacks against UN peacekeepers, constituting war crimes under the Rome Statute, in North Darfur, and the numerous arrest warrants pending to be executed for crimes in Sudan and Uganda we need resolute action by each and every country in Addis Ababa, New York, Beijing, Washington, Brussels or wherever is necessary to protect the victims of these crimes,”* Sen. Inuzuka affirmed.

The next steps for Suriname will be accession to the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Court (APIC) and the adoption of legislation on cooperation with the ICC and to enable domestic prosecutions privileged by the complementarity system of the ICC. **Sen. Maria Cristina Perceval** (Argentina, Convenor of PGA International Law and Human Rights programme) explained: *“on the basis the Paramaribo Action Plan adopted on June 7 in Suriname at a Regional Seminar organised by PGA and the National Assembly of Suriname, we reaffirmed our vow to share experiences from Paramaribo to Kingston in order to allow law reform and to enable the effectiveness of the ICC. Our Global Action Plan for the forthcoming two years that will prove crucial for the ICC will be adopted in October at PGA’s V Consultative Assembly on the ICC to be held in Santo Domingo.”* In this respect, **Ms. Wijdenbosch** concluded: *“We look forward to this interesting and beneficial national process hand in hand with civil society and our government, as well as to joining the celebrations for 10th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Rome Statute next week, to participating in the Review Conference in 2010 and above all in contributing to shape an international community where genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes just simply do not occur”.*

[END]

I. Background Information

- Suriname will become on 15 July 2008 the 107th State Party to the Rome Statute.
- It will be also the 24th country of the Organization of American States to join the ICC system. *Pending to ratify or accede in the Americas remain 11 states: Chile (South America), Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua (Central America) Bahamas, Cuba, Granada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia (in the Caribbean), and the United States (North America).*
- Suriname is also 21st member of the **Organization for the Islamic Conference (OIC)** to join the Rome Statute, as well as the 30th state of the **ACP region** (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) to join the ICC.

II. About PGA – www.pgaction.org

Parliamentarians for Global Action is a network of more than 1300 legislators from 124 Parliaments worldwide that in the past seventeen years has promoted a permanent, effective and universal ICC. Since the launching of the idea of an international court by Mr. A.N. Robison, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and PGA member, in 1989, and the adoption of the Rome Statute, PGA members have led, launched and/or authored ratification and implementation initiatives of the Rome Statute in 61 out of the 106 States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC, including some of the more recent States that have joined the ICC – Madagascar in 2008, Japan in 2007, The Comoros and Chad in 2006, Kenya, the Dominican Republic and Mexico in 2005. PGA has been working in Suriname since 2004.

PGA is co-founder and member of the Coalition of NGOs for the ICC (CICC).

The PGA ICC Campaign receives the support of the European Commission (EU) and of the Governments of Belgium, The Netherlands, and Switzerland, the City of The Hague and the National Congress of the Dominican Republic, as well as core support from the Governments of Denmark and Sweden.

III. Facts about the Rome Statute

Adoption: 17 July 1998 with 120 votes in favour (7 votes against and 21 abstentions) at UN facilitated Diplomatic Conference.

Signatories (17 July 1998 – 31 December 2000): 139 States

States Parties as of 11 July 2008: 106

IV. Facts about the International Criminal Court established by the Rome Statute

Date of Establishment: 1 July 2002, date Rome Statute entered into force.

Main features: permanent Court, complementary to national jurisdictions and with guarantees of institutional independence (not an organ of the United Nations) and judicial independence of its judges and Prosecutor.

Jurisdiction: Individuals who commit crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, after 1 July 2002, either in the territory of States Parties or by nationals of States Parties, or in situations referred by the UN Security Council on the basis of them constituting a threat or breach to international peace and security.

Current situations: Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Darfur, Sudan; Central African Republic.

Current Prosecutorial policy: selection of most serious cases for individuals the most responsible individuals.

Current situations under monitoring by the Prosecutor: Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Colombia and Kenya.

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