



Coalition for
the International
Criminal Court

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FACT SHEET

July 1st Anniversary of the Birth of International Criminal Court

Q: What is the significance of July 1 entry into force?

A: July 1, 2003 is the 1st Anniversary of the entry into force of the International Criminal Court (ICC) treaty. Few people had anticipated the Rome Statute for the ICC would enter into force in 2002, less than four years since the treaty was adopted by an overwhelming majority of countries. The ICC is the world's first permanent international tribunal capable of trying individuals accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The birth of the Court was a giant step forward in the effort to ensure that never again will the likes of Adolf Hitler, Augusto Pinochet, Pol Pot or Idi Amin commit egregious violations of international law with impunity. As of June 17, 2003, the Rome Statute has 90 States Parties and 139 Signatories.

Unlike the *ad hoc* tribunals of the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the ICC will have permanent temporal and broad geographic jurisdiction. The Court has been widely recognized as the single greatest advance in international law since the creation of the United Nations.

Q: How will this occasion marked?

A: To mark the birth of the Court, NGOs have scheduled their own celebratory events in regions around the globe to mark July 1. Last year, in addition to a special plenary at the United Nations and a special reception with government representatives, UN officials and NGOs, events were held around the world in every continent to mark the birth of the Court. This year, informational round tables, press conferences, human rights film-showings, and other commemorative actions are being planned. The Coalition for the ICC will make information about events around the world through its website.

Q: What are some key developments with regards to the Court?

Because the treaty entered into force unexpectedly early, it will take several months before all the necessary staff and systems are in place ensuring the highest international standards. In 2003, the first eighteen judges (including an unprecedented seven women) and the Prosecutor were selected from among some of the finest and most qualified candidates from around the world. The elections were one of the most open and transparent processes in the history of international judicial appointments. The Court was formally inaugurated on March 11, 2003. To date, the Court has already received over 200 referrals, which will be looked into as the Prosecutor outlines his prosecutorial strategy in the coming months.

Q: Who supports the Court?

A: The creation of the Court is the product of extensive negotiations and cooperation between governments, international organizations and members of civil society. The tremendous global support for the Court is evident in that 90 of the 139 countries to sign the Rome Statute have now ratified it.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called for universal support for the ICC. Current ratifications come from all regions of the world and include every member state of the European Union, most Latin American countries and many African, Caribbean and Pacific nations. Progress toward increased representation is being made in the Middle East and Asia, where there have been several ratifications and more countries are reportedly close to completing the ratification process at the national level.

Q: How will the Court's entry into force affect governments?

A: The ICC will promote the ability of governments to address the grave crimes under the Rome Statute. Countries will have the first opportunity to investigate their nationals when accused; the Court will step in only when they are unwilling or unable to do so. Ratifying countries must therefore create domestic legislation to allow them to try these crimes, as well as to cooperate with the ICC.