

U.S. STAYING AWAY FROM INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT BELIEVED ERRONEOUS

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MOSCOW. May 7 (Interfax)- The U.S. decision to not participate in the International Criminal Court now being set up is a mistake according to Alexander Yakovenko, a spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry. The United States has a formal right to do so, in particular under the Vienna Convention on International Treaties Law, but nearly 70 countries have ratified the International Criminal Court Statute and that number may reach 80 before the end of the year, Yakovenko said. For this reason, quite a few people believe that the United States is making a mistake by openly opposing the court, he said.

The United States notified the UN secretary general on May 6 that it has no intention of joining the Rome Statute establishing the court. The United States' negative attitude towards the International Criminal Court is well known, Yakovenko said. The U.S. voted against the Statute at the Rome conference in 1998, but signed it in December 2000 and, in line with international law, had to act without depriving this agreement of its goals and objectives, said Yakovenko. The current administration views even this obligation as excessive and made the decision to inform the UN secretary general that it will not join the Statute, he said. "Unlike the U.S., Russia voted for the Statute at the Rome conference and signed it in September 2000, the Russian diplomat said. He said that the ratification of this document is being considered.