

## **ANNAN REGRETS US DECISION NOT TO RATIFY INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT STATUTE**

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A spokesman for United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said today that the Secretary-General regretted the United States decision not to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which was officially communicated to the UN on Monday.

"Still, with 66 Member States having ratified the Statute, the Court will become a reality on 1 July," spokesman Fred Eckhard said, adding that its creation was a long-term investment in international justice.

"The Secretary-General hopes that, in time, the United States will see it to be not only in its interest but in the global interest to support the new Court and actively participate in it," Mr. Eckhard said. He added that the Secretary-General, as the depository of the Rome Statute, has circulated among UN Member States the letter from the United States communicating its decision.

In a related development, an expert of the UN Commission on Human Rights said today that by its unprecedented action of "unsigned" the ICC's Statute, the United States has effectively forfeited its leadership role in the search for justice and protection of the rule of law and human rights in the international sphere.

"Independent and impartial courts are a basic part of the framework for the legal protection of human rights," Param Cumaraswamy, Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, said in a statement. "They are an indispensable element in the search for justice and the ending of impunity." He stressed that the absence of such courts in many countries made the ICC essential for the prosecution of the serious crimes described in its Statute - which include genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"The ICC cannot be a rogue actor," Mr. Cumaraswamy said, addressing US concerns that the Court would not be accountable. On the contrary, he emphasized, it was bound by Statute and law, and its members could be removed for proven misconduct. Concerns about its possible politicization should be addressed by enhancing its independence and strengthening the transparency of its nominating and appointment procedures, he said.

The Court's Statute, which required 60 ratifications to come into force, exceeded that number on 11 April 2002. As a result, the Court will come into being on 1 July. The US signed the Statute on 31 December 2000 but never ratified it.