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ASSOCIATION OF THE
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and the
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THE UNITED NATIONS**

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“Strengthening International Justice”

“International justice will be strengthened on March 11th when the International Criminal Court’s 18 judges are sworn in at The Hague,” said Ambassador David Scheffer, senior vice president of the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) and former chief U.S. negotiator of the Rome Statute for the ICC (ICC). “The ICC will focus its work on the worst atrocities and those who mastermind them. It will not be a court that the U.S. need fear. In fact, the ICC will become a powerful instrument of justice advancing the American commitment to the rule of law and international peace and security. Even minimal U.S. cooperation with the ICC would make that happen sooner.”

The role of the Court, whose jurisdiction began July 1, 2002, is to investigate and prosecute individuals for atrocities of genocide, crimes against humanity and serious war crimes when national courts cannot or will not. The ratifying nations of the Rome Statute, now numbering 89 and including America's allies and friends, will participate in and govern the ICC. While many American individuals and organizations are behind the Court’s set-up and work, the U.S is not a party and has declared its opposition to the ICC.

The Court’s most recent action was the election of 18 highly qualified judges by its Assembly of States Parties in early February 2003. “These seven women and 11 men represent exceptional experience in criminal and international law. Each of the nations they come from is a friend of the United States and is rated as ‘free’ by the non-profit organization Freedom House,” said Scheffer, who served as the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues from 1997 to 2001 and who will attend the judges’ swearing-in at The Hague next week.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan will attend and speak at the swearing-in ceremony. UNA-USA actively supports the establishment and work of the ICC through its advocacy agenda and grassroots outreach to the American people (see www.unausa.org).

UNA-USA is the nation's largest grassroots foreign policy organization and the leading center of policy research on the U.N. and global issues. UNA-USA offers Americans the opportunity to connect with issues confronted by the U.N. and encourages public support for strong U.S. leadership in the U.N. The American NGO Coalition for the ICC (AMICC), a program of UNA-USA, is a coalition of thirty national organizations advocating U.S. cooperation with the ICC and the soonest possible U.S. ratification of the Rome Statute. For more information about the United States and the ICC, go to www.amicc.org.

PRESS RELEASE