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May 6, 2002

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## **UNA-USA Denounces Administration Disengagement from ICC Treaty: Calls Renunciation of Signature Ineffective and Damaging**

The United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) denounced today's announcement by the Bush Administration that the United States will not become a legal party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). "The decision to become the world's first nation to disavow its own signature on an international treaty is truly disconcerting. It serves no worthy purpose, it undermines historic U.S. leadership in promoting international justice, and it damages relations with our allies," said Ambassador William H. Luers, President and Chief Executive Officer of UNA-USA.

"Most of the world's major democracies have embraced this treaty and they find Washington's renunciation of the ICC unworthy of a great nation," Ambassador Luers said. "This disavowal of our commitment weakens our ability to pursue perpetrators of the most egregious international crimes, and our ability to negotiate critical initiatives with our allies—the strongest backers of the ICC. Nothing is gained and much is lost."

Today's unprecedented repudiation of a multilateral treaty by a signatory risks setting an example for other governments—notably those that have signed but not yet ratified treaties of extreme importance to the United States in its campaign against terrorism. They include the Chemical Weapons Convention and 12 anti-terrorism conventions.

Responding to the assertion by some that U.S. military and political personnel could be political targets of the court, Luers said, "This action will not serve to protect U.S. personnel and may, in fact, increase the risks faced by American soldiers in their global deployments. Repudiating our signature does not shield U.S. officials from the court's possible scrutiny. What it does is eliminate America's ability to shape the rules and priorities of the tribunal."

The ICC will enter into force on July 1, 2002, with almost every NATO ally as a state party, and it will exercise the jurisdiction authorized by its statute. "The smartest course for the United States as a signatory state is to develop a constructive relationship with the ICC that would minimize the chance for success of any politically motivated charge against the U.S. The safeguards already provided in the treaty mean that the United States would have to act with exceptional incompetence for an American citizen to be at risk of prosecution by the Court."

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UNA-USA applauded the U.S. signature of the Rome Statute on December 31, 2000, as a sign of America's commitment to apply its influence to the international objectives of bringing to justice perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, and of deterring such crimes. Ambassador Luers today expressed regret that the Bush Administration has forfeited opportunities to use our signatory status in efforts at the U.N. and with other governments to achieve these objectives.

Acknowledging the Administration's choice not to pursue more drastic measures adverse to the ICC, as some in the Congress had been pressing, Ambassador Luers expressed hope that the United States would use its U.N. Security Council seat to further the work of the ICC as opportunities arise.

UNA-USA is optimistic that, in time, the operation of the ICC will convince the U.S. Government that it has far more to gain by joining its allies and friends in the work of the ICC than by being needlessly intimidated by it. "We fully expect that when the unfounded fears being fanned by the court's opponents are proved wrong, a future American president will seek, and the Senate will consent to, the treaty's ratification," Luers said.

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*The United Nations Association of the United States of America is the largest grassroots foreign policy organization in the United States, and the nation's leading center of policy research on the United Nations and global issues. UNA-USA carries out its action agenda through a combination of public outreach, policy analysis, and international dialogue.*