

**ICC welcoming ceremony
for Guatemala
Statement by Mr. Philippe Brandt,
representing H.E. Ambassador Markus Börlin, Vice-President
of the Assembly of States Parties**

13 July 2012

It is most fitting that during the month when we are commemorating the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute, we are also having the ceremony to welcome Guatemala as the newest State Party, number 121.

Although it may have formally joined the Statute recently, Guatemala has for many years been closely involved in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Rome Statute in 1998, as well as in the subsequent Preparatory Commission that negotiated many of the key supplementary norms that allowed the Court to begin its operations. In addition, Guatemala participated actively in the negotiations on the amendments to the Statute, which culminated with the adoption at the 2010 Review Conference of, inter alia, the provisions concerning the crime of aggression.

It is most encouraging that as the normative regime of the Statute extends over different regions of the world, there are ever shrinking geographical areas where the protection offered by the Rome Statute system has yet to reach. The aspiration of its founders was that the Court would be universal, an objective which we move closer to every year. The accession by Guatemala means that only two Central American States remain outside of that essential normative framework.

The accessions of countries which have managed to overcome the challenges posed by past conflicts are particularly encouraging; joining the Rome Statute system constitutes a tangible demonstration of the commitment by the Government and the people of Guatemala to ensure that impunity for the commission of the most serious crimes will not prevail in the future.

In náhuatl, Guatemala means “*el lugar de muchos árboles*”, the place of many trees. For over 15 and half million Guatemalans, it is now “*el lugar de muchas expectativas*”, the place full of expectations, as the rule of law is strengthened by this historic step, which would hopefully be emulated in the region and around the globe.

Congratulations and welcome to the Rome Statute family.

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