

First Anniversary

International Criminal Court Entrance into force of the Rome Statute

**Message delivered by:
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Future generations will look back on this time as a watershed in our collective struggle for justice in the world. The election this year of an eminently qualified and diverse panel of judges and the June 16 swearing-in ceremony of distinguished Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo bring us ever closer to realizing the vision of establishing a permanent court to address the most heinous crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes. I wish the panel of judges, prosecutor, and staff members of the International Criminal Court well as they assume their profound responsibilities.

The Carter Center has been a strong advocate for the creation of an International Criminal Court for almost a decade. In 1997, the Center and No Peace Without Justice brought key players to Atlanta for a conference on "The United States and the Establishment of a Permanent International Criminal Court." At that time I said, "An ICC will not be a panacea for all ills, but it will be good for the United States and all nations. It marks the next essential step on the road to a more just, peaceful world, and the United States must lead the way." The next year, Carter Center representatives were in Rome for the conference that prepared the ICC treaty, where the Center worked in partnership with other nongovernmental organizations to build U.S. and global support for the Court. I have spoken and written personally to dozens of heads of state urging them to ratify the ICC treaty.

It is my hope that as the Court begins its work, the sight of mass murderers and others being held accountable will send a strong message to the United States and other non-ratifying countries about the power of law and collective international action. Societies and people most at risk will rely on the Court to provide accountability for the most serious crimes and to deter future atrocities. The Court's first cases will herald a new era in global rule of law.