

Welcoming ceremony

Cape Verde

Statement by H.E. Mr. Markus Börlin

Vice-President of the Assembly of States Parties

Mr. President,

Mr. Prosecutor,

Madame Registrar,

Excellencies,

Ambassador Maria de Jesus Veiga Miranda Mascarenhas

On 10 October 2011, the Government of the Republic of Cape Verde confirmed its strong commitment to international criminal justice and the protection of human rights, as well as its unreserved support for the pursuit of international peace and security and an effective international criminal justice system, when it deposited its instrument of ratification to the Rome Statute.

The Rome Statute entered into force for Cape Verde on 1 January 2012, bringing the total number of States Parties to the Statute to 119. With its ratification of the Rome Statute, Cape Verde became the 33rd African State Party, the first Lusophone country in Africa and the 12th member of the Economic Community of West African States to adhere to the Rome Statute.

Cape Verde's ratification of the Rome Statute does not only demonstrate the commitment of a growing number of countries to the Rome Statute system, but it also conveys a strong message to the international community to further strengthen its efforts to ensure that the most heinous crimes should be investigated and justice dispensed. It also reaffirms the central role the African region has been playing in support of the Court, which was further emphasized with the recent election by acclamation of the **designated** new Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, during the tenth session of the Assembly of States Parties.

We hope that Cape Verde's ratification of the Rome Statute will pave the way for other African countries to take decisive and concrete steps towards fighting impunity by joining the Rome Statute system, and therefore sending a **strong signal** to the international community that impunity for the most serious crimes is no longer **acceptable. The** Court faces many challenges ahead in these early days of 2012, and will need the continuous support of its States Parties to discharge its mandate effectively.

It is therefore a true privilege for me, on behalf of the Assembly of States Parties, to congratulate the Republic of Cape Verde once again and to extend to it a warm welcome to the growing ICC family.

The Hague, 19 January 2012