

Intervention at the General Debate: Malaysia and the Asia-Pacific Region
By Ms. Usha Kulasegaran

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am a Practising Lawyer, and I am a member of the Bar Council Human Rights Committee of Malaysia. The Bar Council Human Rights Committee has always advocated for full and unconditional accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 1998, and accession should be done without any further delay.

For many years now, the Malaysian Bar Council Human Rights Committee, together with our counterparts in the Asia Pacific region and the global network of the Coalition for the ICC have been campaigning for universality of the Rome Statute around the world and in Malaysia.

Achieving independence in 1957, Malaysia has emerged as a well respected nation not only in Southeast Asia but in the world as well, being a country of peace, stability and harmony. It has, over the years, sent peace keeping missions under the UN to several countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Timor Leste to name a few. Recently, it served as prime mediator in the peace negotiations between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the government of the Philippines, ending decades of war in the southern part of the Philippines, a war that had killed thousands and had displaced over a million people.

Malaysia founded the Global Movement of Moderates and is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and Organization of Islamic Countries. A well respected nation in the Asian Pacific region, Malaysia is a country of peace, stability and harmony.

With all these, we at the Malaysian Bar Council Human Rights Committee think that there are enormous advantages to Malaysia in acceding to the Rome Statute, and becoming a State Party to the ICC. It will not only show a good example to its neighbors in the ASEAN but it will also convey a strong message of Malaysia's respect for life and for humanity and the principles of international accountability.

While the Rome Statute has 121 states parties, Asia and the Pacific has historically been underrepresented before the ICC. To date, only 17 are states parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC. In ASEAN alone, out of the 10 member-states, only Cambodia and the Philippines have ratified. But there are signs that our global campaign for universality, carried out hand in hand by national and international organizations throughout Asia is paying off. Three of the six ratifications in 2011 were from Asia/Pacific (Philippines, Vanuatu and the Maldives). With Malaysia's accession, the voice of the region at the ICC and at the international community will be strengthened and multiplied.

The International Criminal Court is a huge breakthrough for mankind, to ensure the atrocities that we have seen in the past history do not recur. Malaysia by being a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC will be part of the growing international movement that will ensure that those responsible for such atrocities will be held accountable. We urge the Malaysian government to accede to the Rome Statute of the ICC without further delay.

By Ms. Usha Kulasegaran,
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