



**Judge Fernández de Gurmendi
President of the International Criminal Court**

Remarks at Welcoming Ceremony for El Salvador

Video message

3 March 2016

Your Excellency, Minister Martínez Bonilla,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to make this statement to congratulate El Salvador on depositing the instrument of accession to the Rome Statute.

This is a great moment that marks the end of a long process to which many have contributed. The Court, and I personally, were happy to engage in dialogue with parliamentarians and other officials from El Salvador on several occasions in order to address concerns and respond to technical questions during the internal process that related to the accession to the Rome Statute.

I am now extremely delighted that this thorough process has come to an end and that El Salvador has decided to take this step to join the treaty together with the other 27 States Parties from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Our region has supported the establishment and functioning of the Court from the beginning, recognising that to ensure accountability for international crimes it is necessary to have a complementary institution that can assist in the absence of genuine action by national jurisdiction.

By acceding to the Rome Statute, El Salvador strengthens the Court's jurisdiction and enters the growing majority of the world's nations that have combined their efforts for the purpose of ending impunity and helping prevent the most serious crimes of concern to humanity. It is also an expression of solidarity with the victims of such crimes everywhere.

I truly hope that El Salvador's accession will encourage the five remaining States from the Latin American and the Caribbean region to give serious consideration to joining the Court as this would represent a step toward a safer future based on the rule of law.

However, it is important to take into account that accession is not the end of the process; in fact it is rather the beginning. The Court cannot perform its mandate effectively without the cooperation and assistance of States, from preliminary examinations to investigations, and from trials to enforcement. It is important to ensure that adequate procedures are available under national law for all forms of cooperation, as well as ensure that the Rome Statute crimes are incorporated in the national criminal code.

Minister Martínez Bonilla,

Again, I extend my warmest congratulations to El Salvador on its decision to join the Rome Statute, making it the 124th State Party to the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court.

I have no doubt that your country will make important contributions to the evolving system of international criminal justice built on the complementarity of an independent ICC and strong national jurisdictions.

Let me express, again, my appreciation to you and all the people whose work and effort have been crucial in this process.

Thank you.