

**Cour
Pénale
Internationale**



**International
Criminal
Court**

Judge Sang-Hyun Song
President of the International Criminal Court

*Remarks at Welcoming Ceremony for Maldives,
the 118th State Party to the Rome Statute*

*The Hague, Netherlands
06 December 2011*

Your Excellency, Ambassador Ali Hussain Didi,

I wish you a very warm welcome on behalf of the entire International Criminal Court. It is a great pleasure for me to open this ceremony to celebrate the Republic of Maldives becoming the 118th State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

I am glad to be joined today by several of my fellow judges: the first Vice-President, Judge Fatoumata Diarra of Mali, the second Vice-President, Judge Hans-Peter Kaul of Germany, Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova of Bulgaria, Judge Daniel Nsereko of Uganda, Judge Sanji Monageng of Botswana and Judge Cuno Tarfusser of Italy.

With us are also the ICC's the Registrar, Ms. Silvana Arbia and the Deputy Registrar, Mr. Didier Preira, and Mr. Phakiso Mochochoko, representing the Office of the Prosecutor. Finally, I am glad to note the presence of the Vice-President of the Assembly of the States Parties, His Excellency Ambassador Jorge Lomónaco.

Your Excellency, Ambassador Didi,

In March this year, I had the pleasure to exchange views on the ICC with representatives from Maldives at the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Consultation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and I was encouraged by the resolve they showed for moving forward the process of your country's accession to the Rome Statute.

I am truly delighted that those efforts have now fully materialised, and Maldives has become yet another state increasing Asian participation in the Rome Statute system of international justice.

In his address to the UN General Assembly earlier this year, the Vice-President of Maldives, Mr. Mohamed Waheed said that by acceding to the Rome Statute, your country joined “a growing alliance of states who stand firmly against those who believe they can violate human rights with impunity”.

Indeed, the ICC is not only about judicial proceedings – it is also about the norms and values enshrined in the Rome Statute that each State Party has voluntarily chosen to respect.

Furthermore, by acceding to the Rome Statute, Maldives has reinforced the legal protection of its territory and its citizens against terrible atrocities.

Your Excellency,

The nation of Maldives has recently embarked on an important journey of strengthening its democracy and its adherence to international human rights norms. The adoption of a new constitution in August 2008 was an important milestone on this path, followed by the ratification of several core human rights treaties.

As recently noted by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madame Navi Pillay, your country has brought up human rights issues in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and in the Islamic world where it has been promoting dialogue on the compatibility of Islam and human rights.

Maldives is also currently a member of the UN Human Rights Council, supporting, for instance, the establishment of a new UN Special Rapporteur on transitional justice matters.

All these developments give me confidence that Maldives will be an active participant in the ICC framework and that it will make an important contribution to the evolving system of international criminal justice.

Your Excellency,

Let me stress that accession to the Rome Statute marks only the beginning of a country's participation in the ICC system.

Under the principle of complementarity enshrined in the Rome Statute, the domestic justice system of each state should serve as the main deterrent worldwide and provide justice if atrocities do occur.

One of the most crucial next steps is to create a domestic legal framework for the domestic prosecution of Rome Statute offences, as well as for various modes of cooperation with the ICC. I also hope Maldives will soon ratify the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the ICC.

Your Excellency,

By joining the ICC, Maldives has taken the world one step closer to achieving universal adoption of the Rome Statute. War crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are crimes of international concern, and it is only together that we can end the terrible suffering that such atrocities continue to cause.

I sincerely hope that other South Asian nations will follow your example so that we could soon welcome new States Parties from your region.

I congratulate the nation of Maldives on its decision to join the Rome Statute and I warmly welcome your country to the International Criminal Court.