



Judge Sang-Hyun Song

President of the International Criminal Court

Remarks at Welcoming Ceremony for Guatemala,

121st State Party to the Rome Statute

The Hague, Netherlands

13 July 2012

Your Excellency, Ambassador Palomo Silva,

It is an honour for me to open this welcoming ceremony to celebrate Guatemala becoming the 121st State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. I wish to extend to you a very warm welcome on behalf of the entire Court.

I am glad to be joined today by some of my fellow judges: the first Vice-President, Judge Sangi Monageng and Judge Silvia Fernandez De Gurmendi, the President of the Pre-Trial Division.

Also with us are the ICC's Prosecutor, Madame Fatou Bensouda; the Registrar, Ms. Silvana Arbia and the Deputy Registrar, Mr. Didier Preira.

Your Excellency,

By joining the ICC, Guatemala has sent a strong, unequivocal signal of its solidarity with the victims of the gravest crimes and its commitment to international law and the protection of fundamental human rights and dignity.

Guatemala has been supportive of the ICC for many years and your accession has been only a matter of time. Your continued encouraging statements at the ASP, as well as your participation at the Review Conference in Kampala, have persistently reminded us of your strong commitment to join the ICC. It therefore came as no surprise when, in January of this year, President Otto Fernando Pérez Molina in his inaugural address reaffirmed this commitment and stated that Guatemala's accession would show Guatemala's "aspiration to transition towards a future governed by the law and respect for human rights of all peoples and nations".

I am truly delighted that this day has finally come and I am impressed by the speed with which Guatemala has acceded to the Rome Statute since the Presidential elections of November last year.

Guatemala has experienced four decades of injustice and conflict which has claimed more than 200,000 lives. In 2006, in response to this suffering, Guatemala signed an agreement with the United Nations to establish an International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, or CICIG. Guatemala's accession to the Rome Statute is a natural next step that solidifies your country's commitment to regional and international justice. Furthermore, Guatemala has reinforced the legal protection of its territory and its citizens against these terrible atrocities. I

am certain that your country's historical experience will strengthen its ability to make an important contribution to the further development of international criminal justice.

Your Excellency,

Let me stress that accession to the Rome Statute marks only the beginning of the 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 steps to be taken next is to create a national legal framework for the domestic prosecution of Rome Statute offences, as well as for various modes of cooperation with the ICC.

I also wish to encourage Guatemala to ratify the Agreement of Privileges and Immunities, as well as to consider concluding other agreements such as those on the enforcement of sentences and relocation of witnesses.

In January this year, Guatemala assumed a seat on the United Nations Security Council for a two year term, and Guatemala's support of the ICC on relevant issues within the Council would be greatly appreciated.

Your Excellency,

By joining the ICC, Guatemala has taken the world one step closer to achieving universal adoption of the Rome Statute. Guatemala's accession also has great regional importance since it brings Central American participation in the Rome Statute system to an almost complete representation, with only two states not yet party to the Rome Statute; El Salvador and Nicaragua.

I sincerely hope that Guatemala's accession will send an encouraging signal to these states to also join us. 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.

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

"Felicitaciones y bienvenidos!"