



**Welcoming Ceremony for Moldova as the 114<sup>th</sup> State Party to the Rome Statute**

**11 February 2010**

**Remarks of Judge Sang-Hyun Song, President of the International Criminal Court**

Excellencies,

Dear fellow judges,

Mr. Prosecutor, Madame Registrar,

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to open this welcoming ceremony to celebrate the Republic of Moldova becoming the 114<sup>th</sup> State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

I wish to extend a very warm welcome on behalf of the entire Court to the delegation of the Republic of Moldova, and in particular to His Excellency, Ambassador Mihai Gribincea.

On the Court side, we are joined today by several of my colleagues. They are the Second Vice-President of the Court, Judge Hans-Peter Kaul, Judge Erkki Kourula, Judge Anita Ušačka, Judge Bruno Cotte and Judge Cuno Tarfusser. With us are also the ICC's Deputy Prosecutor, Madame Fatou Bensouda and the Registrar, Ms. Silvana Arbia, and the Deputy Registrar, Mr. Didier Preira. The Assembly of States Parties is represented by the Vice-President of the Assembly, His Excellency, Ambassador Jorge Lomonaco.

Excellencies,

With Moldova formally becoming a member on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, this year began on a very promising note, as we moved one step closer to global reach of the Rome Statute. A press release from Moldova's Foreign Ministry described well the significance of joining the ICC, stating that *“Moldova brings its own contribution to the promotion of the universality and the integrity of international criminal justice.”*

Indeed, by ratifying the Statute, Moldova has joined the majority of the world's sovereign states in a historic undertaking to end impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to humanity.

Already more than ten years ago the Republic of Moldova declared its intention to join the ICC, as it signed the Rome Statute on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, 2000. I am delighted that the intention has now materialised into reality, and that Moldova is today part of the ICC's family of nations committed to justice and the rule of law.

Like many other nations, Moldova has experienced traumatic events in its recent history, and I am convinced that membership in the ICC will be an important factor in securing a peaceful and stable future for your country and the wider region.

We know that the ratification of an international treaty of great importance such as the Rome Statute is not a simple undertaking. Depending on a country's constitution, it usually requires several stages of careful consideration and decision-making, often involving all branches of government; the legislature, the executive, and even the judiciary.

In the case of Moldova, for instance, the Constitutional Court, at the application of the government, adopted a Resolution regarding the constitutionality of the Rome Statute on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, 2007. In the process, the Constitutional Court requested opinions not only from state organs but also from the academia and the civil society. This is but one glimpse of the long road which led to the ultimate result that we are celebrating today.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to the efforts of all stakeholders who contributed to this success. In addition to the state authorities, strong recognition must be given to the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, and the national civil society coalition in Moldova which worked hard to ensure that the ICC remained on the national agenda.

I sincerely hope that Moldova's decision to ratify the Rome Statute will inspire other countries to do the same. Only five countries from the Eastern European group of States remain outside the Rome Statute system, and I would be delighted to see them follow Moldova's example. Let me once again recall that the universality of the Rome Statute is our common objective, reiterated at the Review Conference last year, and we must all work together if we wish to reach that goal one day.

Ambassador Gribincea,

I congratulate your nation on its decision to join the Rome Statute and I warmly welcome the Republic of Moldova to the International Criminal Court. I look forward to working together for the cause of justice and to deepening our relationship in the future.

Thank you.