

Cairo, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008

**The Arab Coalition for the ICC urges the Arab Summit to ratify and accede to the Rome Statute**

On the occasion of the Arab Summit scheduled to be held in the Syrian capital Damascus from 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2008, and in light of both the circumstances countries in the region are currently experiencing and the political, international and rights issues which pose an extremely serious threat to the Arab nation and its peoples, the Arab Coalition for the International Criminal Court (which brings together more than 71 non-governmental organisations from various Arab states) calls on Arab governmental delegations taking part in the Summit to produce recommendations and decisions which underline the necessity of acceding to and ratifying the ICC's Rome Statute. The ICC is one of the most important international tools for holding to account those involved in the most serious crimes against humanity.

The Arab Coalition believes that the current level of ratifications of the Rome Statute points to a step-backwards in the Arab region compared with developments in the rest of the world and with international instruments generally, and criminal justice in particular. While the number of ratifications of the Rome Statute currently stands at over 106, Arab countries only represent a third of these ratifications.

Governments in Arab states must press for the anchoring of international criminal justice mechanisms in order to reduce possibilities for a special or mixed court. Certain Arab countries are currently suffering from their subjection to special courts because they are not members of the ICC.

The Arab Coalition calls on Arab governments to support the role of the ICC, a mechanism which will contribute to the anchoring of non-partisan, independent and neutral international criminal justice.

The crimes which have been, and are currently being, committed in the Arab region render it one of the areas most in need of a permanent international criminal court which will deter criminals who commit genocide, war crimes, crimes of aggression and crimes against humanity. These crimes are mostly committed against humanity, and against Arab peoples.