

**Welcoming Ceremony  
International Criminal Court  
8 November 2011**

**Remarks of  
H.E. Ambassador Lourdes G. Morales  
Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines  
The Hague, Kingdom of the Netherlands**

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

**His Excellency Ambassador Jorge Lomónaco, Vice-President of the Assembly of States Parties,**

**Her Excellency Ambassador Tiina Intelmann, the incoming President of the Assembly of States Parties,**

**Registrar Silvana Arbia,**

**Esteemed colleagues and friends of the ICC,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**On behalf of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, I wish to thank you for the very warm welcome you have extended to our country, the Philippines, as a new State Party to the Rome Statute. Indeed, it has been a very long road for us towards this moment – of joining you all at this Welcome Ceremony here in The Hague, with the Rome Statute entering into force for the Philippines last week on the first of November.**

**The Philippines has a long history of championing human rights and humanitarian law. Beginning in 1945 when the country declared independence, it recognized the compulsory jurisdiction of the International**

**Court of Justice. In 1948, the Philippines became a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1949, the Philippines became a party to the Geneva Convention. Furthermore, the Philippines is also a party to all other major international human rights and humanitarian law instruments.**

**The Philippines has also always aspired for the establishment of a permanent international criminal court that would dispense justice effectively and efficiently. It has always believed in having an institution that would address the problem of impunity of the perpetrators of the most serious violations of the laws of humanity to help maintain international peace and security. It was based on these that the Philippines actively participated in the Rome Conference of 1998, which paved the way for the establishment of the ICC.**

**In the years that followed from becoming a signatory of the Rome Statute on December 28, 2000 to the deposit of the Instrument of Ratification on August 30, 2011, the Philippines continued to strive in its advocacy for justice, human rights and the rule of law even as it dealt with problems of internal politics and differences in policy priorities, which delayed ratification for some time. Nonetheless, I wish to point out that the Philippines has a full range of domestic laws that complement the Rome Statute; most significant of these being Republic Act 9851 or the *Philippine Act on Crimes against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide and other Crimes against Humanity* signed into law on December 11, 2009.**

**The ratification of the Rome Statute presents a significant achievement for the Philippines, particularly in relation to its long-standing commitment and adherence to human rights and humanitarian law and true to its position as a leading human rights advocate in Asia. The Philippines believes that the ratification of the Rome Statute will help end impunity by holding individuals, and not only states, accountable to the highest international standards of military conduct and humane behaviour.**

**This year is surely a significant year for the Philippines, now that it has become part of the Assembly of States Parties. It will be a significant year for the ICC as well, with the election of the next Prosecutor and a new generation of judges. As further indication of our commitment to upholding the Rome Statute and a serious desire to contribute to the work of the Court, the Philippines has presented a candidate for judge, Dr. Miriam Defensor Santiago. Dr. Santiago was a sponsor of Republic Act 9851 and spearheaded the Philippine Senate's concurrence to the Ratification of the Rome Statute. We are confident that her extensive experience and expertise, as well as insight and strong sense of advocacy, will make her an asset to the Court.**

**The Honourable Judges, officials and staff of the ICC,**

**Our distinguished colleagues and friends in the Assembly of States Parties,**

**Our friends and supporters in civil society,**

**We wish to express our deepest thanks and appreciation for your warm welcome, openness, support and cooperation.**

**On behalf of the Philippine Government, I wish to express our appreciation to the members of the Court, as well as to all States Parties, for their hard work, devotion and dedication in bringing the ICC to where it is now. An expanding and dynamic institution, supported by 119 States Parties and counting, aiming at putting an end to impunity of the perpetrators of the most heinous crimes, serving justice effectively and efficiently, and championing the rights and welfare of victims.**

**I would like to close by saying that, indeed, the Philippines is proud to be a member of the ICC family. We look forward to working with all of you.**

**Thank you very much.**