Judge Sang-Hyun Song
President of the International Criminal Court

Remarks at Welcoming Ceremony for Philippines,
the 117th State Party to the Rome Statute

The Hague, Netherlands
7 November 2011
Your Excellency, Ambassador Gutierrez Morales,

Malgayang pagdating!¹ I wish you a very warm welcome on behalf of the entire International Criminal Court, as well as congratulations on your recent appointment as the Philippines Ambassador to the Netherlands.

It is a great honour for me to open this ceremony to celebrate the Philippines becoming the 117th State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. I am glad to be joined today by several of my fellow judges: Judge Erkki Kourula of Finland, Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova of Bulgaria, Judge Cuno Tarfusser of Italy, and Judge Kuniko Ozaki of Japan. With us is also the Registrar, Ms. Silvana Arbia.

The Assembly of State Parties is represented by His Excellency Ambassador Jorge Lomónaco, the Vice-President of the Assembly, and I am also happy to note the presence of Her Excellency Ambassador Tiina Intelmann of Estonia, who is designated to be the next President of the Assembly of States Parties.

Your Excellency,

In March this year, I travelled to Southeast Asia in order to raise awareness about the ICC and to facilitate discussions about ratification of the Rome Statute in a region that is severely underrepresented among the ICC’s States Parties.

I could not have chosen a better place to start the visit than Manila. On the first day I met with H.E. President Benigno Aquino III, who announced to me that he had just signed the ratification bill, which would be sent to the Senate for concurrence.

I also had the opportunity to meet with several Senators and to address the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I sensed widespread support for the ICC, and a great deal of optimism that the ratification bill would be adopted, paving the way for the Philippines to join the ICC family. Now that day has come, and I am truly delighted to celebrate it with you!

Your Excellency,

¹ Welcome!
The Philippines is a model in its region for a strong and vibrant democracy, which your people have fought hard for. The People Power Revolution of 1986 demonstrated that human rights, accountability, and a strong sense of justice are cherished values deeply felt in the Filipino heart and soul.

Today, the Philippines is once again showing leadership in its region, as it becomes only the second ASEAN country to ratify the Rome Statute. This not only strengthens the legal protection of your territory and your citizens against terrible atrocities, but it fortifies the global struggle against impunity for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

I sincerely hope that the historic step taken by your country will encourage other Southeast Asian nations to follow the example of the Philippines.

Your Excellency,

The Philippines now has an equal right with every other State Party to shape the future of the International Criminal Court, and I look forward to seeing your country participate actively at the forthcoming session of the Assembly of States Parties in New York this December.

Let me stress that accession to the Rome Statute marks only the beginning of a country’s active participation in the ICC system. Some of the most important next steps are to ratify the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities and to create the domestic legal framework necessary to ensure full and effective cooperation with the ICC.

Your Excellency,

Before I finish, I would like to express my appreciation to all those in the Philippines who worked very hard to make this day possible. I believe the Filipino civil society deserves a special mention – during my visit to Manila, I was deeply impressed by the commitment of the members of the Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court, and their tireless efforts to advance understanding of the Rome Statute in the Philippines.

Let me conclude by saying that I heartily agree with the Chair of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Philippine Senate, Senator Loren Legarda, who said that the ratification of the Rome Statute will “strengthen our stand in protecting human
rights, including the right to human life and dignity, and will bring a strong message that we will never tolerate impunity.”

Malugod kong binabati ang Pilipinas on the decision to join the Rome Statute. I warmly welcome your country to the International Criminal Court. Mabuhay!

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2 I warmly congratulate the Philippines.