**Concept Note**

**Maximising the Engagement of Victims, Affected Communities and Civil Society in the Rome Statute Review Conference**

**Background**

In May-June 2010 the Review Conference of the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court (ICC) will take place in Kampala, Uganda. The primary purpose of the Review Conference is to discuss specific amendments to the Rome Statute, particularly the inclusion of the definition and conditions for the exercise of jurisdiction of the crime of aggression. The Conference also serves another important function: to take stock of the International Criminal Court ten years after its founding and to evaluate more broadly the state of international criminal justice.

To capitalise on the opportunity presented by the Review Conference in Uganda, No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), the Human Rights Network - Uganda (HURINET-U) and the Ugandan Coalition on the International Criminal Court (UCICC), with the support of the Government of Uganda, are organising a series of activities before and during the Conference. The initiative creates avenues of engagement between representatives of ICC States Parties and the people affected by the Court, in order to enhance State Parties’ understanding of the justice needs and experiences of affected communities; to enhance knowledge and understanding of the ICC among affected communities and the broader public in Uganda; and to maximise the participation and representation of civil society, particularly representatives of victims and affected communities, in the Conference proceedings.

Since the Ugandan Government referred the situation in Uganda to the ICC in 2004, the Court has become a critical institution in the pursuit of justice for the victims of atrocities committed during Uganda’s long-running conflict. Within Uganda, however, many sectors of the population, including some victim communities, have little understanding of the ICC and its work. Even among those with a general awareness of the Court, there is limited understanding of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) and its relationship to the ICC. Misconceptions are also common, particularly regarding the degree of influence that any particular State or group of States can have over the Court.

Furthermore, although States Parties are generally aware of the need for the ICC to avoid such misconceptions and have a positive impact on and interaction with the communities affected by its work, there is often a gap between the justice needs of these communities and the perception of those needs by ICC States Parties. This is at least in part due to the fact that most delegates representing their State at the ASP currently have little or no direct experience in situation countries or interaction with the populations ultimately served by the Court’s work. They therefore lack a full, first-hand understanding of the justice needs of those populations. This initiative therefore responds to two urgent needs: to make the ICC more responsive and accountable to the populations it serves, and to raise awareness and understanding of the ICC among the Ugandan public.

**Activities**

The proposed initiative will be completed through two sets of activities. The first will be implemented in advance of the Review Conference in Kampala and consists of a series of field visits by ICC State Party delegates to different regions of Uganda in order to meet with the key stakeholders involved in the fight against impunity: communities affected by the work of the Court, victims of crimes under its jurisdiction, civil society, and national and local authorities.

The second activity will take place during the Review Conference and consists of a People’s Space at the Conference venue, where events will be organised to facilitate interaction between civil society and Conference delegates, as well as a briefing on the pre-Conference field visits. These events will amplify the experiences and lessons of the pre-Conference visits through the effective participation and contributions of civil society, especially those representing victims and affected communities, in the Conference proceedings and will thus facilitate the representation of the views of victims and affected communities in the stocktaking process.

**Contacts:**

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Objectives

This unique collaboration between international and local civil society takes advantage of the occasion of the Review Conference in Uganda to further several important and related goals: improving the responsiveness and accountability of the ICC and its State Parties to the people affected by the Court's work; ensuring strong and visible participation from victims and civil society in the Review Conference proceedings; taking advantage of the location of the Conference in Kampala to spread awareness and understanding of the ICC in Uganda; and strengthening the role of civil society in relation to the ICC’s role in Uganda.

The first objective is to help the ICC to become more responsive and accountable to the populations it serves by bridging the gap that currently exists between those communities and the ICC’s States Parties. By bringing ICC States Party representatives into direct dialogue with victims and affected communities, both through the pre-Conference visits and the People’s Space at the Conference itself, the project is designed to foster a greater understanding among States Parties of the justice needs and expectations of those populations, which will encourage them to support and guide the Court in meeting those needs.

The second objective is to ensure that victims and the communities affected by the ICC’s work in Uganda have a strong and visible presence at the Review Conference and are provided opportunities to participate effectively in its proceedings. This project aims to ensure victims and civil society organisations have multiple opportunities to enter into dialogue with decision-makers at the Review Conference and to afford States Parties a chance to interact with the local population. In this way, the project will contribute to the stocktaking process by facilitating the representation of the views of victims and affected communities at the Review Conference itself.

The third objective is to use the Review Conference in Kampala to spread awareness and understanding of the ICC in Uganda. The project has the full support of the ICC, specifically its Outreach Division, and is being implemented in close collaboration with their Review Conference-related outreach and public information activities. The project creates outstanding opportunities for public and media engagement by bringing representatives of a range of ICC member states to Uganda, and it will be accompanied by consistent media engagement.

The final objective is build capacity within Ugandan civil society to take effective action on ICC issues, both by boosting the impact and visibility of civil society actions related to the Review Conference in the short-term and by enhancing civil society capacity on ICC issues in the long-term.

Practical Information: Visits to Uganda Prior to the Review Conference

Between January and May 2010, NPWJ, HURINET-U and UCICC will arrange up to 10 visits by groups of high-level representatives of ICC States Parties to Uganda. The schedule of visits is as follows:

- 25-29 January 2010: Completed, with participation of the H.E. Ambassador Christian Wenaweser, President of the ASP, and the delegations of Denmark, Kenya, Sierra Leone and South Africa.
- 11-17 February 2010: Completed, with the participation of H.E. Ms. Elisabeth Rehn, Member of the Board of Directors, ICC Trust Fund for Victims; the delegations of Chile, DRC and Finland; and the ASP Secretariat.
- 29 March-2 April 2010: Completed, with the participation of the delegations of Argentina, Djibouti, Uganda and Venezuela.
- 4-9 May 2010
- 26-29 May 2010 (multiple groups)

Each visit will include one or two days in Kampala and two to three days travelling to the conflict-affected regions of Northern and Eastern Uganda. Groups will consist of representatives of between three and six States Parties, preferably the same representatives who will head their State’s delegation to the Review Conference, who would be received and accompanied throughout the visit by representatives of NPWJ, HURINET-U and UCICC. The composition of groups for each visit will be determined by the availability of State representatives, but with a view to having representatives from a variety of geographical regions in each group.

Practical Information: People’s Space and Briefing during the Review Conference

For the duration of the Review Conference, a People’s Space will be established at the Review Conference venue as a forum where civil society working on issues of peacebuilding and the fight against impunity can showcase their work. During the Conference, a briefing will also be organised where State and civil society representatives who participated in the pre-Review Conference visits can brief other Conference delegates on their experiences and views. These events will afford civil society, particularly victims’ and affected communities’ representatives, an opportunity to participate directly in the Review Conference, which can contribute to the evaluation of the ICC’s impact on victims and affected communities during the stocktaking process.