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Côte d'Ivoire: The ICC Prosecutor should investigate the most serious crimes committed since 2002

Amnesty International welcomes the decision announced today by the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) authorizing the ICC Prosecutor to open an investigation into crimes under international law committed in Côte d'Ivoire since the post-electoral crisis which began at the end of November 2010. In particular, it welcomes the decision to ask the Prosecutor to present information to the Chamber within one month on potentially relevant crimes committed between 2002 and November 2010; the period when some of the most serious crimes were committed.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called upon the Ivorian authorities and the ICC Prosecutor to investigate all crimes under international law committed by all parties. The organization has documented crimes against humanity, as well as war crimes, including murder, enforced disappearances, torture and crimes of sexual violence committed in the country, in particular between 2002 and November 2010. The Pre-Trial Chamber decision gives hope to the thousands of victims of these crimes, notably the women and girls who have been subjected to rape and other crimes of sexual violence committed by all parties.

The organization also calls upon the ICC Prosecutor to submit the information requested by the Pre-Trial Chamber concerning all the crimes under international law committed since 2002 by both the supporters of former President Laurent Gbagbo and by the *Forces Nouvelles*, the armed group that took control of the North of the country.

In order to rebuild the rule of law in Côte d'Ivoire, the ICC Prosecutor should not limit the investigation either by only focusing on the crimes under international law committed by the supporters of the former President or by ignoring all the serious crimes under international law committed since 2002, notably crimes of sexual violence.

The best way to ensure justice and full reparation for all victims of the nine-year crisis is to encompass this whole period of time and deal with all the serious crimes under international law regardless who committed them.

Background Information

Although Côte d'Ivoire is not yet a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, on 18 April 2003 the country's then Minister of Foreign Affairs lodged a declaration with the Registrar of the ICC accepting the exercise of jurisdiction by the ICC with regard to crimes under international law committed in the territory of Côte d'Ivoire since 19 September 2002. The declaration expressly stated that it is not time limited and covers all war crimes and crimes against humanity.

On 14 December 2010, Alassane Ouattara officially confirmed the jurisdiction of the ICC and requested that the Prosecutor open an investigation into crimes committed within the competence of

the ICC since 2002. In a second letter, dated 3 May 2011, President Ouattara once again confirmed the recognition of the ICC's jurisdiction, but suggested narrowing the scope of the investigation to crimes committed since 28 November 2010.