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Vanuatu urged to demonstrate its continuing commitment to justice

Amnesty International today called on the government of Vanuatu to demonstrate its commitment to justice by completing accession to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

On the occasion of the United Nations' annual treaty event this week, Prime Minister Sato Kilman, attending the UN General Assembly, is urged to seize the opportunity to accede and thereby confirm Vanuatu's commitment to upholding international human rights standards.

Vanuatu already completed the first stage in the process of accession to the Rome Statute in August 2011 when Parliament passed a law committing to investigating and prosecuting crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes before their national courts.

"The August vote in Vanuatu's parliament is to be heartily welcomed but should be followed without delay by accession to the Rome Statute" said José Luis Díaz, Amnesty International's Head of Office and Representative at the United Nations.

The United Nations event entitled 'Towards Universal Participation and Implementation' invites member states to demonstrate their continuing commitment to the rule of law by signing, ratifying or acceding to various international treaties with special focus on those dealing with UN priorities including human rights.

Vanuatu will become a party to the ICC once the government has taken all necessary steps to complete, at the international level with the United Nations, the process begun by Parliament in August. The Vanuatu Parliament will also need to pass effective legislation to ensure domestic laws are in accordance with the Rome Statute and other international criminal law.

"With accession to the Rome Statute the government of Vanuatu will be demonstrating unequivocally its commitment to international justice and the fight against impunity" said José Luis Díaz, Amnesty International's Head of Office and Representative at the United Nations.

Countries that accede to the ICC commit to investigate and prosecute genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes before their national courts and agree that, if they are genuinely unable or unwilling to do so, the International Criminal Court may step in.

In the next months, Amnesty International will issue a paper analysing Vanuatu's ability to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law. The paper will include recommendations to bring legislation in line with international law, including the Rome Statute.