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Community of Portuguese Speaking States: Appeal to Member States to Participate in 100th Ratification of Rome Statute

On the eve of the meeting of the Council of Ministers of Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) to be held from 19 to 20 July 2005 in Luanda, Angola, Amnesty International called upon the Council to appeal to member states of the CPLP, that have not yet ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute) to do so in time to participate in an upcoming event to be hosted at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, that could facilitate achievement of the CPLP goal of ratification of the Rome Statute. To mark the 100th ratification of the Rome Statute, the United Nations Treaty Office will hold a special ceremony commemorating this historic achievement and recognizing those states that ratify at the ceremony.

As of 14 July 2005, 99 countries have already ratified the Rome Statute, including three Portuguese-speaking countries. In addition, 139 countries all over the world have signed it. Amnesty International welcomed the fact that the CPLP has already addressed the need for states to ratify the Rome Statute in the Coimbra Declaration of the VIII meeting of the Council of Ministers, reaffirmed in the São Tomé Declaration of the V Conference of Heads of States and Governments of CPLP. However, despite these positive steps, no further plan of action was taken, and five Portuguese-speaking countries remain to ratify, although they all have signed it in due time.

Ratification of the Rome Statute by Portuguese-speaking countries would reinforce the representation of CPLP countries in the International Criminal Court (ICC). As states parties to the Rome Statute, countries are able to have a representative in the Assembly of States Parties to the ICC and vote in all decisions regarding the functioning of the ICC, including voting in the elections of judges. Qualified national citizens from states parties may be nominated as candidates, although no two judges may be nationals of the same state. The next elections will take place during the 2nd part of the Assembly of States Parties in January 2006.

In April 2002, the United Nations hosted a ceremony marking the entry into force of the Rome Statute following the required 60 ratifications. Ten states simultaneously deposited their instruments of ratification and were honoured by the world community for their historic role in establishing the ICC. To celebrate the 100th ratification of the Rome Statute, the United Nations Treaty Office will hold a similar event. With the Dominican Republic becoming the 99th State party on 12 May 2005 and the Mexican Senate approving the ratification of the Rome Statute on 21 June 2005, the ceremony is likely to take place during the United Nations Treaty Event in September 2005 in New York. In light of the significance of the 100th ratification, it is expected that the ceremony will generate extensive media coverage from international press and national press from countries that ratify at the event.

Amnesty International hopes that the Council of Ministers will, in their final communiqué at the end of the Luanda meeting, urge CPLP member states, to ratify the Rome Statute in time to participate in this event. We also hope that it will call for the prompt adoption of a plan of action to implement the paragraphs on the ICC included in the declarations referred to above.