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## **Philippines: Senate should vote to join International Criminal Court**

Amnesty International today called on Philippine Senators to vote in favour of ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), helping the fight against impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes worldwide.

If the bill is approved by the Senate on 22 August, the Philippines will join almost two-thirds of countries in the world which have ratified the Rome Statute.

“By ratifying this treaty, the Philippines will strengthen its commitment to protecting human rights on the international stage,” said Marek Marczyński, Amnesty International’s Campaign Manager on International Justice.

“Senators should seize this moment, and vote to ratify the Rome Statute,” he said.

At present, the only ASEAN countries to have ratified the Rome Statute are Cambodia and Timor-Leste. In March 2011, Malaysia announced its intention to join the ICC.

“A vote for ratification will ensure that the Philippines becomes the first founding member of ASEAN to join the ICC,” Marek Marczyński said.

In 1998 the Philippines played an active part in the drafting of the Rome Statute. On 28 December 2000, the government signed the treaty.

However, it was only in March 2011 that President Benigno S. Aquino III announced he would submit the treaty to the Senate.

Earlier this month, Amnesty International Philippines submitted a petition of more than 8,000 signatures by Philippine citizens urging the Senate to approve ratification.

The treaty, which must be approved by more than two-thirds of the Senate, has already passed two readings, including one by the Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations.

The ICC was established in 2002 to investigate and prosecute genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, when the national authorities are unable or unwilling to do so.

States that ratify the Rome Statute commit to investigating and prosecuting these crimes before their national courts. They agree that, if they are unable or unwilling to do so, the ICC may step in.

These states also agree to cooperate fully with the work of the ICC in investigating and prosecuting crimes committed around the world.

To date, 116 countries have ratified the Rome Statute.