



**Welcoming ceremony  
Tunisia  
Statement by H.E. Mr. Jorge Lomónaco  
Vice-President of the Assembly of States Parties**

Mr. President,  
Madame Registrar,  
Representative of the Office of the Prosecutor  
Excellencies,  
Ambassador Mohamed Karim Ben Becher,

In depositing its instrument of accession to the Rome Statute on 24 June 2011, the Government of Tunisia demonstrated with a specific, concrete and extremely relevant undertaking its commitment to international criminal justice. The Assembly of States Parties warmly welcomes Tunisia as the 116<sup>th</sup> State Party and applauds its decision to join the international community in its efforts to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes that threaten the peace, security and well-being of the world.

With its accession to the Rome Statute, Tunisia became the 32<sup>nd</sup> African State, the first North African country, and the fourth member of the Arab League to become a State Party. Not even a week later, Tunisia went still further than some State Parties and, on 29 June, acceded to the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the ICC. The accession to the Statute as well as to the Agreement highlights the Court's role as a key actor in the field of international criminal justice at a time of dynamic changes in the region.

The area of what is now Tunisia played an extremely crucial role in the shaping the history of North Africa and the Middle East. 2,500 years later, events taking place there are marking the world once more.

From the city of Carthage, which was the dominant civilization in the Western Mediterranean in the fifth century BC to its significant economical and agricultural growth during the Roman Empire, it provided impetus to other civilizations in the region. In the past few months, Tunisia has once again become a source of inspiration. What started in the city of Sidi Bouzid in December 2010 as an act of civil resistance by a single person has resonated across the region and led to fundamental changes there and beyond, the extent of which still remains to be seen.

With its decision to accede to the Rome Statute as well as to other international human rights instruments, Tunisia sends a strong and unequivocal message to the international community that it is embracing its shifting times and that it wishes to commit to human rights and the rule of law. Tunisia has demonstrated its unflinching commitment to enter into a new era where society is guided by clear rules, as well as by the principle of equality before the law.

Highlighting that accession to the Statute is only the beginning of the process of engagement and commitment of any State Party with the ICC system, from 19 to 23 September 2011, a seminar on the International Criminal Court will be convened in Tunis. This timely initiative will focus on providing interactive training on the Rome Statute to leading law professionals with a view of enhancing States' cooperation with the Court. As seen on many previous occasions, seminars have shown to be an effective means in raising awareness about the Rome Statute system and we can only welcome Tunisia's initiative to place the Court on the agenda of the North African region.

The symbolism of today's ceremony should not be underrated. This morning we are celebrating part of Tunisia's very auspicious future as much as what Tunisia's accession to the Rome Statute may bring next to the region and its relationship with ICC. I am confident that the accession of Tunisia will encourage other States, particularly in North Africa, to become States Parties to the ICC in the near future. Fighting impunity and promoting accountability is in the interest of all. It is therefore a true privilege for me, on behalf of the Assembly of States Parties, to congratulate Tunisia and to extend it a warm welcome to the growing ICC family.

The Hague, 16 September 2011

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