

## The Elders urge all states to commit to universal, impartial International Criminal Court

London, 26 October 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

At the end of their bi-annual meeting today, The Elders called for redoubled efforts to turn the International Criminal Court into a truly universal, and impartial, tribunal.

During discussions in London, the potentially serious consequences of recent decisions by three African countries – Burundi, Gambia and South Africa – to withdraw from the ICC, along with Botswana’s criticism of South Africa’s decision, were considered by the Elders.

The Elders recalled that, in 1998, on signing the Rome Statutes that led to establishment of the International Criminal Court, South Africa’s President Nelson Mandela said:

*“Our own continent has suffered enough horrors emanating from the inhumanity of human beings towards human beings. Who knows, many of these might not have occurred, or at least been minimised, had there been an effectively functioning International Criminal Court.”*

When he founded The Elders in 2007, Nelson Mandela called on the organisation to work tirelessly for peace, justice and human rights, on the basis of full equality of all peoples. Nine years later, the Elders therefore urge all states to continue, and indeed deepen, their engagement with the ICC – in the interests of their own people.

[Kofi Annan](#), current Chair of The Elders, added:

*“The ICC should be a source of hope to those victims of serious abuses whose domestic judicial systems have let them down. Unfortunately however the perception in parts of Africa and elsewhere that the Court is not impartial, and that big powers who are not members apply double standards, is undermining its credibility and effectiveness.”*

The Elders called on those three African states who have just announced their intention to quit the Court, and others who may be contemplating following suit, to change course and instead fight for much-needed reform from within, as members.

Urgent reform of the ICC is required to improve its overall performance and effectiveness in delivering justice for all in a timely and scrupulously neutral fashion; The Elders believe that such reforms would lead to the enhanced credibility of the Court.

Three Permanent Members of the UN Security Council – China, Russia and the United States – are not members, while other important and populous states, such as India and Indonesia, have either not signed the Rome Statutes or else have not ratified them. This poses a fundamental impediment to the Court's ability to deliver equality of justice worldwide.

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### **About The Elders**

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Kofi Annan](#) (Chair), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#) (Deputy Chair), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Honorary Elders.

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