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PRE-TRIAL CHAMBER I

Before:

Judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi, Presiding Judge Judge Hans-Peter Kaul Judge Christine Van den Wyngaert

SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE IN THE CASE OF THE PROSECUTOR V. LAURENT GBAGBO

Public

Decision on the "Demande d'autorisation d'interjeter appel de la décision de la Chambre Préliminaire du 14 décembre 2012 'on the date of the confirmation of charges hearing and proceedings leading thereto' (ICC-02/11-01/11-325)"

No. ICC-02/11-01/11

14 January 2013

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Decision to be notified, in accordance with regulation 31 of the Regulations of the Court, to:

The Office of the Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda	Counsel for the Defence Emmanuel Altit Agathe Bahi Baroan
Legal Representatives of the Victims	Legal Representatives of the Applicants
Unrepresented Victims	Unrepresented Applicants for Participation/Reparation
The Office of Public Counsel for Victims Paolina Massidda	The Office of Public Counsel for the Defence
States Representatives	Amicus Curiae
REGISTRY	
Registrar & Deputy Registrar	Defence Support Section
Silvana Arbia Didier Preira	
Victims and Witnesses Unit	Detention Section
Victims Participation and Reparations Section	Other

No. ICC-02/11-01/11

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Pre-Trial Chamber I (the "Chamber") of the International Criminal Court (the "Court") hereby issues this decision on the Defence "Demande d'autorisation d'interjeter appel de la décision de la Chambre Préliminaire du 14 décembre 2012 'on the date of the confirmation of charges hearing and proceedings leading thereto' (ICC-02/11-01/11-325)" (the "Application").¹

I. Procedural history

1. On 5 December 2011, the first appearance of Laurent Gbagbo ("Mr Gbagbo") before the Court took place. During that hearing, Pre-Trial Chamber III scheduled the commencement of the confirmation of charges hearing for 18 June 2012.²

2. On 5 June 2012, the Defence filed the "*Requête de la Défense en report de l'audience de confirmation des charges prévue le 18 juin 2012*", in which it argued that the confirmation hearing scheduled for 18 June 2012³ should be postponed, *inter alia*, because Mr Gbagbo's state of health made him unfit to stand trial.⁴

3. On 12 June 2012, the Single Judge issued the "Decision on the '*Requête de la Défense en report de l'audience de confirmation des charges prévue le 18 juin* 2012'", postponing the confirmation of charges hearing to 13 August 2012.⁵

4. On 19 June 2012, the Defence submitted its "Defence application for additional medical and psychological evaluation of President Gbagbo".⁶

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¹ ICC-02/11-01/11-342.

² ICC-02/11-01/11-T-1-ENG, p. 8.

³ ICC-02/11-01/11-T-l-ENG, p. 8.

⁴ ICC-02/11-01/11-140-Conf, paras 21-60. A public redacted version is also available, see ICC-02/11-01/11-140-Red2.

⁵ ICC-02/11-01/11-152-Red, p. 14.

⁶ ICC-02/11-01/11-158-Conf-Exp-tENG and annexes. A confidential redacted version is also available, see ICC-02/11-01/11-158-Conf-Red2.

5. On 26 June 2012, the Single Judge issued the "Order to conduct a medical examination", whereby she appointed medical experts in order to conduct medical, psychological and psychiatric examinations of Mr Gbagbo, with a view to determining whether he is fit to take part in the proceedings against him.⁷

6. On 2 August 2012, the Single Judge issued the "Decision on issues related to the proceedings under rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence and postponing the date of the confirmation of charges hearing", in which it was decided that the "commencement of the confirmation of charges hearing is postponed until the issue of Mr Gbagbo's fitness to take part in the proceedings against him is resolved".⁸

7. On 2 November 2012, the Chamber issued the "Decision on the fitness of Laurent Gbagbo to take part in the proceedings before this Court" (the "Fitness Decision"), finding that Mr Gbagbo is fit to take part in the proceedings before this Court.⁹

8. On 12 November 2012, the Defence filed the "Demande d'autorisation d'interjeter appel de la « Decision on the fitness of Laurent Gbagbo to take part in the proceedings before this Court » (ICC-02/11-01/11-286-Conf)".¹⁰

9. On 13 November 2012, the Single Judge issued the "Decision on the 'Prosecution's Request pursuant to Regulation 35 for variation of time limit to disclose incriminating evidence and modify the list of evidence for the confirmation hearing, and Request for redactions'".¹¹

⁷ ICC-02/11-01/11-164-Conf-tENG.

⁸ ICC-02/11-01/11-201, p. 8.

⁹ ICC-02/11-01/11-286-Conf. A public redacted version has been filed simultaneously.
¹⁰ ICC-02/11-01/11-292-Conf. A corrigendum and public redacted version thereof were filed on 15 November 2012, see ICC-02/11-01/11-292-Conf-Corr and ICC-02/11-01/11-292-Corr-Red.
¹¹ ICC-02/11-01/11-294, p. 7.

10. On 29 November 2012, the Chamber rejected the Defence application for leave to appeal the Fitness Decision.¹²

11. On 11 December 2012, a status conference was held before the Single Judge, for the purpose of discussing issues related to the continuation of the proceedings leading to the hearing on the confirmation of charges.¹³

12. On 14 December 2012, the Chamber issued the "Decision on the date of the confirmation of charges hearing and proceedings leading thereto", whereby the Chamber, *inter alia*, set the commencement of the confirmation of charges hearing for Tuesday, 19 February 2013 and established a calendar for the proceedings leading thereto (the "Decision").¹⁴

13. On 24 December 2012, the Defence filed the Application, by which it requests leave to appeal the Decision on the basis of article 82(1)(d) of the Rome Statute (the "Statute").¹⁵

14. On 31 December 2012, the Prosecutor filed her response to the Application, requesting the Chamber to reject the Application in its entirety (the "Response").¹⁶

II. Background and submissions of the parties

A. The Decision

15. As recalled above, the Chamber, in the Decision, *inter alia*, set the date for the commencement of the confirmation of charges hearing. The Chamber noted the issues raised by the Defence at the status conference of 11 December 2012, which, according to the Defence, should be considered when setting the

¹² ICC-02/11-01/11-307.

¹³ ICC-02/11-01/11-T-11-CONF-ENG and ICC-02/11-01/11-T-12-CONF-ENG.

¹⁴ ICC-02/11-01/11-325.

¹⁵ ICC-02/11-01/11-342.

¹⁶ ICC-02/11-01/11-343.

date for the hearing. The Chamber took into account several factors for the purposes of deciding the date of the hearing. In particular, the Chamber considered that, in light of the development of the current proceedings in this case, "had proceedings for the determination of Mr Gbagbo's fitness not been undertaken, the Defence would have been expected to be ready to proceed to the confirmation of charges hearing scheduled for 13 August 2012".¹⁷ The Chamber further observed that, at the status conference of 11 December 2012, the Defence requested more time before the hearing in order to conclude a number of investigative activities which were initiated only recently. In this regard, the Chamber considered that "in these circumstances [...] [and] without prejudice to the possibility for the Defence to rely on further evidence that may be obtained before the expiration of the time limit under rule 121(6) of the Rules, the conclusion of such tardy investigative activities cannot constitute a pre-condition to hold the confirmation of charges hearing".¹⁸

16. In setting the date for the confirmation of charges hearing, the Chamber further considered: (i) the delays that have already taken place since the first appearance of Mr Gbagbo; (ii) the limited scope and purpose of the confirmation of charges hearing in accordance with the Court's statutory regime; (iii) the Chamber's obligation to conduct proceedings expeditiously in accordance with Mr Gbagbo's right under article 67(1)(c) of the Statute to be tried without undue delay; and (iv) the need to ensure that the date of the confirmation hearing allows for the respect of the time limits set out in rule 121(3) and (6) of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence (the "Rules").¹⁹

17. In view of its analysis, and taken into account the submissions advanced by the Prosecutor and the Defence at the status conference of 11 December

¹⁷ Decision, para. 20.

¹⁸ Ibid., para. 21.

¹⁹ Ibid., para. 22.

2012, the Chamber decided that the confirmation of charges hearing would commence on Tuesday, 19 February 2013.

B. The Application

18. The Defence requests leave to appeal the Decision on the basis of the following issues:

- a. the failure to hear the Defence (the "First Issue");
- b. the reasoning of the Chamber (the "Second Issue");
- c. the assumption that the parties should have been ready since August 2012 (the "Third Issue");
- d. error in law: the finding that the successful completion of inquiries or investigations is generally not a "pre-condition" to hold the confirmation of charges hearing (the "Fourth Issue");
- e. the dates provided for by the Decision prevent the Defence from conducting any investigation and from obtaining critical evidence (the "Fifth Issue");
- f. the dates provided for by the Decision make it impossible for the Defence to prepare for the confirmation of charges hearing (the "Sixth Issue); and
- g. the error regarding the scope and purpose of the confirmation hearing and the delay in the proceedings (the "Seventh Issue").

19. With respect to the First Issue, the Defence submits that prior to the status conference of 11 December 2012, the Single Judge had already decided the date of the confirmation of charges hearing. On this assumption, the Defence argues that the Chamber failed to hear the Defence for the purposes of fixing the date of the confirmation of charges hearing, and accordingly,

under the First Issue, identifies the following question: *"pouvait-elle se décider* sans entendre les arguments de la défense ?".²⁰

20. Under the Second Issue, the Defence challenges the reasoning of the Chamber employed in the Decision. In particular, the Defence reiterates the arguments advanced during the status conference of 11 December 2012 and repeats that certain issues should have been settled before establishing the date for the confirmation of charges hearing. Furthermore, the Defence alleges that the Chamber erred by not fully considering the difficulties faced by the Defence in investigating and getting prepared for the confirmation of charges hearing.²¹

21. As regards the Third Issue, the Defence submits that the Decision erroneously relies on the assumption that the parties should have been ready for the confirmation of charges hearing since August 2012. More specifically, the Defence argues that the Chamber failed to consider that, after August 2012, the Prosecutor has continued her investigation, proceeded to disclosure of evidence, and indicated her intention to charge Mr Gbagbo under an additional mode of liability to that already chosen for the previous document containing the charges filed in July 2012.²²

22. Under the Fourth Issue, the Defence submits that the Chamber erred in law, in violation of article 61(6) of the Statute, in considering that "mener à bonne fin des enquêtes ou investigations en général ne constitue pas une « pre-condition » à la tenue d'une audience de confirmation des charges".²³

23. For its Fifth Issue, the Defence argues that, due to budgetary and logistical constraints, as well as because of the numerous redactions applied

²⁰ Application, paras 5 to 9.

²¹ Ibid., paras 10 to 30.

²² Ibid., paras 31 to 49.

²³ *Ibid.*, paras 50 to 53.

to evidence disclosed by the Prosecutor, the Defence is unable to conduct any investigation and obtain critical evidence within the time limit set in the Decision. In particular, the Defence submits that, given the established time frame, it will not be in a position to conduct a useful mission in the field to gather relevant evidence for the confirmation of charges hearing.²⁴

24. Similarly, under the Sixth Issue, the Defence argues that the dates provided for in the Decision prevent the Defence from preparing for the confirmation of charges hearing. More specifically, with respect to this Sixth Issue, the Defence argues that it has been requested to discuss with the Registry the possible practical arrangements for Mr Gbagbo's attendance of the confirmation of charges hearing, and therefore that, considering the limited number of members of the Defence team, it cannot at the same time be on a mission in the field.²⁵

25. For its Seventh Issue, the Defence asserts that the Chamber erred in the Decision by referring to the limited scope and purpose of the confirmation of charges hearing, without considering the importance of the hearing and of its consequences. In particular, according to the Defence, this entails a violation of articles 61(6) and 67(1)(b) of the Statute, and affects the adversarial nature of the confirmation hearing.²⁶ Furthermore, under the same issue, the Defence argues that the Chamber committed an error by taking into account "the delays that have already taken place since the first appearance of Mr Gbagbo".²⁷ In this regard, the Defence submits that "*l'utilisation ici du terme*

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²⁴ *Ibid.*, paras 54 to 62.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, paras 63 and 64.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, paras 66 to 68.

²⁷ Decision, para. 22.

« retard », alors qu'il ne s'agissait que de garantir les droits du Président Gbagbo, semble montrer que la Chambre s'en tient à un calendrier préétabli".²⁸

26. Turning to the reasons for which the identified issues meet the criteria of article 82(1)(d) of the Statute, the Defence advances a global argumentation, stating that those issues affect the fairness of the proceedings considering the importance of the confirmation of charges in the procedural system of the Court.²⁹ Furthermore, the Defence argues that the purported issues affect the fairness of the proceedings given that the Defence lacks appropriate resources and there is an imbalance of resources between the Defence and the Prosecutor.³⁰

27. As far as the expeditiousness of the proceedings is concerned, the Defence recalls that the Chamber, in the Decision, stated that, in setting the date for the confirmation of charges hearing, it needed "to take into account its obligation to conduct proceedings expeditiously in accordance with Mr Gbagbo's right under article 67(1)(c) of the Statute to be tried without undue delay".³¹ In this regard, the Defence contends that "[p]ermettre au prévenu d'être en état de se défendre c'est en réalité organiser les conditions d'une procédure rapide et efficace. Le lui interdire conduit à ralentir la procédure".³²

28. The Defence further submits that an immediate resolution by the Appeals Chamber of the purported issues would materially advance the proceedings given the need to rid the process of its potential flaws since the pre-trial stage of the proceedings.³³ In this regard, according to the Defence, *"régler les questions soulevées ici permettra d'éviter que la procédure soit viciée,*

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²⁸ Application, para. 82.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, paras 85 to 87, and para. 98.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, paras 88 to 94.

³¹ Decision, para. 22.

³² Application, para. 101.

³³ *Ibid.*, paras 106 to 109.

suspendue ou annulée. Les questions posées ici sont celles de l'équité et de l'intégrité de la procédure qui pourraient être mises en cause par les décisions de la Chambre Préliminaire^{".34} Finally, the Defence argues that an immediate resolution of the alleged issues is necessary because "si la défense ne pouvait pas tenir les délais de procédure fixés par la Chambre, elle se verrait dans l'obligation de demander des prorogations de délais conformément à la Norme 35 du règlement de la Cour".³⁵

C. The Response

29. The Prosecutor opposes the Application in its entirety. The first argument upon which the Prosecutor relies in requesting the Chamber to reject the Application is that none of the purported issues identified by the Defence qualifies as an "issue" within the meaning of article 82(1)(d) of the Statute.

30. In particular, the Prosecutor contends that the First, Third, Fourth and Seventh Issues do not arise from the Decision, since the Defence misrepresents the relevant findings of the Chamber.³⁶ As regards the Second, Fifth and Sixth Issues, the Prosecutor argues that they "largely repeat arguments that have already been submitted to the Single Judge during the status conference of 11 December 2012 and seek to re-litigate the same matters", and, therefore, that the Defence "merely disagrees with the manner in which the [Chamber] adjudicated on these issues".³⁷

31. The Prosecutor further submits that even if, *arguendo*, any of the purported issues would qualify as appealable issues, the Application fails to demonstrate how they would meet the criteria for leave to appeal under article 82(1)(d) of the Statute. In particular, according to the Prosecutor, the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 107.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 110.

³⁶ Response, paras 5 to 10.

³⁷ Ibid., para. 11.

Defence's core argument that the identified issues affect the fairness of the proceedings because the Defence lacks appropriate resources cannot be upheld, since "the question of resources is irrelevant to the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Seventh issue, as they raise legal or procedural matters that are unrelated to the number of staff or amount of financial resources that is available to the Defence".³⁸ Similarly, the Prosecutor submits that, while the question of resources may have some relevance with respect to the Fifth and Sixth Issues, "it is highly speculative to assume that additional resources for the Defence would enable the Defence to overcome the difficulties raised in the context of these issues".³⁹

32. Moreover, the Prosecutor asserts that the Application does not include any coherent argument concerning the impact of the issues on the expeditious conduct of the proceedings, given that the arguments presented are incapable of meeting the requirements for leave to appeal in relation to any of the seven purported issues.⁴⁰

33. Further, the Prosecutor observes that the Defence does not provide any arguments on how the issues referred to in the Application significantly impact the outcome of the trial.⁴¹

34. Finally, according to the Prosecutor, the Defence fails to demonstrate in concrete terms why an immediate resolution by the Appeals Chamber of the seven issues would materially advance the proceedings, given that the Defence merely makes general statements on the need to clear the process already at the pre-trial stage of the proceedings.⁴²

³⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 14.

³⁹ Ibid., para. 14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 16.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, para. 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, para. 18.

III. The Applicable law

35. The Chamber notes article 82(1)(d) of the Statute, rule 155 of the Rules and regulation 65 of the Regulations of the Court.

36. In particular, the Chamber recalls that article 82(1)(d) of the Statute sets out the following requirements to the granting of a request for leave to appeal:

- (a) the decision involves an issue that would significantly affect (i) the fair and expeditious conduct of the proceedings, or (ii) the outcome of the trial; and
- (b) in the opinion of the Pre-Trial Chamber, an immediate resolution by the Appeals Chamber may materially advance the proceedings.

37. With respect to the particular question of the meaning of the term "issue" in the context of the first limb of the test under article 82(1)(d) of the Statute, the Appeals Chamber has stated:

An issue is an identifiable subject or topic requiring a decision for its resolution, not merely a question over which there is disagreement or conflicting opinion. [...] An issue is constituted by a subject the resolution of which is essential for the determination of matters arising in the judicial cause under examination.⁴³

IV. Analysis and conclusions of the Chamber

38. The Chamber is of the view that the Defence has failed to identify in its Application any appealable issue. In the following paragraphs, the Chamber will lay out its analysis and conclusions with respect to each purported issue advanced by the Defence.

39. As noted above, the First Issue presented by the Defence is whether the Chamber "*pouvait-elle se décider sans entendre les arguments de la défense*". The Chamber notes that, contrary to the Defence submission, the arguments

⁴³ Appeals Chamber, "Judgment on the Prosecutor's Application for Extraordinary Review of Pre-Trial Chamber I's 31 March 2006 Decision Denying Leave to Appeal", 13 July 2006, ICC-01/04-168, para. 9.

advanced by the Defence were heard at the status conference of 11 December 2012, and considered in the Decision. In this regard, the assumption upon which the Defence submission on the First Issue entirely relies (*i.e.* that the Single Judge had already decided the date of the confirmation of charges hearing before the status conference) is incorrect and speculative. Therefore, the issue of whether the Chamber is entitled to establish the date for the confirmation of charges hearing without hearing the arguments of the Defence does not arise from the Decision, and as such does not constitute an appealable issue under article 82(1)(d) of the Statute.

40. With respect to the Second, Fifth and Sixth Issues, the Chamber notes that the Defence merely repeats the same submissions advanced at the status conference of 11 December 2012. In particular, the Defence concludes that the Chamber erred by rejecting the Defence arguments and establishing the date for the confirmation of charges hearing despite the Defence submissions (Second Issue), given that the established date prevents the Defence from conducting any investigation and obtaining critical evidence (Fifth Issue) and makes impossible for the Defence to prepare for the confirmation of charges hearing (Sixth Issue). The Chamber considers that a mere reiteration of prior arguments and an expression of disagreement with the analysis and conclusion made by the Chamber are not sufficient to identify an "issue", i.e. a "an identifiable subject or topic requiring a decision for its resolution [and] not merely a question over which there is disagreement or conflicting opinion".44 The requirements of article 82(1)(d) of the Statute are therefore not met.

41. Under the Third Issue, the Defence contests the Chamber's "assumption" that the parties should have been ready for the confirmation of

⁴⁴ Id.

charges hearing since August 2012. The Chamber considers that the arguments put forward by the Defence stem from a misunderstanding of the Decision. The Chamber expected the parties to be ready for the scheduled date in August 2012, but did not request that any investigative activities on the part of the Defence had to be finalised before August 2012. Indeed, even before a new date for the confirmation of charges hearing was established, the Chamber expressly permitted both the Prosecutor and the Defence to conduct further investigation, and, in the Decision, specifically allowed both parties to rely at the confirmation of charges hearing on "additional evidence regardless of the time when it was collected",⁴⁵ including, therefore, evidence gathered as a result of investigative activities conducted after August 2012. The date for the confirmation of charges hearing was thus established taking into account the need "to ensure disclosure between the parties of additional evidence not previously included in their respective lists of evidence and the related presentation of a new document containing the charges by the Prosecutor",⁴⁶ and in light of the time frame provided for by rule 121 of the Rules. This can in no way be understood as a limitation of the Defence's rights to challenge the evidence presented by the Prosecutor or to present its own evidence, as alleged by the Defence. Accordingly, the Third Issue does not arise from the Decision.

42. The Fourth Issue is presented by the Defence as an error in law made by the Chamber in stating that "mener à bonne fin des enquêtes ou investigations en général ne constitue pas une « pre-condition » à la tenue d'une audience de confirmation des charges".⁴⁷ The Chamber, however, notes that the Defence misrepresents the relevant finding contained in the Decision. Rather than constituting a general ruling, the finding of the Chamber was confined to the

⁴⁵ Decision, para. 31.

⁴⁶ Ibid., para. 20.

⁴⁷ Application, p. 11.

specific circumstances of the present case, and, in particular, to the tardiness of the investigative activities initiated by the Defence "almost one year after Mr Gbagbo's initial appearance before the Court and several months after the Prosecutor's disclosure of the bulk of her evidence for the confirmation of charges hearing".⁴⁸ In the Decision, the Chamber analysed the Defence request for more time to conclude its investigation, and determined, in the context of the particular circumstances of this case, and in light of the submissions made by the Defence, that the commencement of the confirmation hearing could not be delayed until completion of all the investigative activities tardily initiated by the Defence. Accordingly, the Fourth Issue, as presented by the Defence, does not arise from the Decision.

43. For its Seventh Issue, the Defence submits that the Chamber erred by referring to the limited scope and purpose of the confirmation of charges hearing, and, by so doing, disregarded the Defence's rights under article 61(6) of the Statute, as well as the adversarial nature of the confirmation hearing. Under the same Seventh Issue, the Defence also submits that the Chamber erred by taking into account the delays that have taken place since Mr Gbagbo's first appearance before the Court. The Defence claims that the reference to those delays is used by the Chamber "pour justifier les atteintes aux droits du Président Gbagbo" and that it "semble montrer que la Chambre s'en tient à un calendrier préétabli".⁴⁹

44. The Chamber is of the view that also with respect to this purported issue the Defence misrepresents the Decision. As regards the first limb, the Chamber, in the Decision, merely recalled the limited scope and purpose of the confirmation of charges hearing as established in the procedural system and in the jurisprudence of the Court. This was a relevant factor to be taken

⁴⁸ Decision, para. 21.

⁴⁹ Application, paras 79 and 82.

into account when deciding the date of the commencement of the confirmation of charges hearing, as it will be for the determination of its duration. Conversely, the Chamber in no way concluded that the limited scope and purpose of the confirmation of charges hearing entails a restriction of the Defence's rights to challenge the Prosecutor's evidence or to present its own evidence. In the same vein, the reference to the objective length of the proceedings in the present case since Mr Gbagbo's initial appearance before the Court cannot be understood as limiting the rights of the defence under article 61(6) of the Statute, and it was made in the context of the reiteration of the Chamber's "obligation to conduct proceedings expeditiously in accordance with Mr Gbagbo's right under article 67(1)(c) of the Statute to be tried without undue delay".⁵⁰ Contrary to the submission of the Defence, the date for the commencement of the confirmation of charges hearing was determined in light of the time frame established in the legal texts of the Court, and, in particular, with full respect of the time limits set out in rule 121(3) and (6) of the Rules. Accordingly, the Seventh Issue, as presented by the Defence, does not arise from the Decision, and leave to appeal must thus be rejected.

FOR THESE REASONS, THE CHAMBER

REJECTS the Application.

Done in both English and French, the English version being authoritative.

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⁵⁰ Decision, para. 22.

Monauch

Judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi Presiding Judge

Judge Hans-Peter Kaul

Judge Christine Van den Wyngaert

Dated this 14 January 2013 At The Hague, The Netherlands