

Statement delivered by the Secretary of the meeting, Mr. John Brandolino, UNODC

Monday, 28 February 2022, 10:00 hrs, New York

Agenda item 1(b): Opening of the First Session

Excellencies, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen, good morning, good afternoon and good evening, depending on the location from where you are attending the meeting.

My name is John Brandolino, the Director of the Division for Treaty Affairs of UNODC.

I would thank the Chair and the Ad Hoc Committee for inviting me, on behalf of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, to address the opening of this important first session of the Ad Hoc Committee to elaborate a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes.

I would like, first and foremost, to congratulate the Chair and the Committee on the start of the substantive work for negotiating a new convention.

Our efforts bring me back to my experience twenty years ago, when I participated in negotiations for another UN treaty involving a substantive crime area of great common concern to Member States: corruption. With the concerted efforts of all delegates from Member States, the end product of that multi-year effort continues to have a profound effect on how the world views, addresses and cooperates relating to corruption.

Today, we stand at the starting point of another monumental effort relating to another area of great concern around the world: cybercrime. As the Chair has mentioned, the importance of this new Convention cannot be underestimated. The use of ICTs for criminal purposes has occupied international headlines in recent years. We have witnessed an increasing amount of malicious cyber operations undertaken by criminals.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated ICT-related criminal activity, forcing us to work remotely. And criminals have quickly adapted to the situation and exploited our increased dependency, making it even more paramount to effectively address this challenge as soon as possible.

Like many of the crime issues falling under UNODC's mandates, cooperation among States is absolutely necessary to address ICT crimes in an effective way. But the topic of concern for this current negotiation bears added challenges.

For example, many States and their officials have struggled to keep pace with new technologies and the lightning movement of online criminals and the evidence related to such crimes. While the challenges we face are indeed sobering, the successful elaboration of a convention that is widely supported and used will constitute a monumental step forward.

In that context of promoting wide cooperation, we are pleased to see great interest from stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector, to participate in this meeting. I am convinced that their expertise and inputs will be highly valuable for this process – a process that we hope will view these stakeholders as important partners in addressing ICT related crimes.

UNODC has accumulated experience in servicing the elaboration of criminal law treaties. It has also long-time experience in supporting Member States in combating cybercrime in both policy-making and

operational areas and at national, regional and international levels – particularly through our Global Programme on Cybercrime.

We are honored to be serving in our secretariat role. You have designed a negotiation process that will require excellence behind the scenes from the secretariat located in multiple continents. You have envisioned a process that will be unprecedented in its ability to engage Member States and stakeholders in person and electronically from around the world, whether it be during the formal sessions or intersessionally.

And I can say very confidently today that this process has made us stronger. It has taken us some time to develop and oil the machine, as they say, particularly since the entire process since day one has been made more complicated by the roller coaster effect of a global pandemic. But the secretariat is rising to the challenge.

You cannot imagine the close cooperation this has fostered over the past years between our colleagues in Vienna and New York – the long hours and late night emails coming from dedicated staff covering many divisions and sections around UNODC and the NY secretariat, whether it be DGACM in NY, CMS in Vienna, OLA, the UN budget office, our substantive cybercrime team, among many others. And to all of them, let me say it has been a pleasure. We have built a unique secretariat team that I can confidently say to you today is ready to meet the needs and challenges of this important process – whether it be substantively or procedurally.

Madame Chair, let me take a moment to thank you particularly for your patience and hard work. Since your election over eight months ago, we have built a constructive team with you and your colleagues which I believe will serve us well over the coming years to ensure we help delegates move this process forward in a constructive and inclusive way.

UNODC stands ready to fully support all delegations and the Committee Chair in this monumental process to elaborate a new convention. We are honored to be with you here today, and, on behalf of the entire Secretariat, I wish you every success - and an ultimate outcome that will truly make its mark globally in the efforts to prevent and counter cybercrime.

Thank you, Madam Chair, and all delegates for your attention.