

**Ceremonial (Opening Segment):**  
**Remarks by H.E. Alma Zadić, Austrian Federal Minister of Justice**

**Mister Chair, Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

- Despite the current troubled times, I am truly honoured to be here with you today.
- Traditionally **Austria** has strong ties to the **United Nations**. Austria is proud to be the **host of the United Nations** for the past forty years. It is our honour and pleasure to welcome the international community, representatives of states, international and regional organizations as well as the civil society and academia.
  
- The 30th Session of the CCPCJ gives me the opportunity to stress the **importance of the rule of law**. The advancement of the rule of law at national and international level is essential for sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- I strongly believe that **national criminal justice systems** should ensure effective, fair and humane procedures, based on the protection of human rights, including the right to a fair trial.
  
- I would like to **thank Executive Director**, Ms. Ghada Waly, for her commitment in leading the Office. I pay also my tribute to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) staff here in Vienna and in the field offices.
- The **UNODC** and its governing bodies, the **CND and the CCPCJ**<sup>1</sup>, are central structures within the United Nations to coordinate our actions to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
  
- As all members of the United Nations have committed themselves within the framework of the SDGs to strengthen the rule of law, I would like to underline particularly **SDG 16**, which addresses the importance of **access to justice for all people**.

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<sup>1</sup> CND – Commission on Narcotic Drugs, CCPCJ – Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

- By promoting this objective, the Member States have advocated the development of the rule of law and its implementation.
- Initiatives for the development and protection of independent institutions and the rule of law, such as promoting the safety of journalists, protecting human rights in the administration of justice and **the fight against corruption** are crucial components of Austria's human rights policy.
- Corruption does not only lead to enormous **financial damage**, but above all to **social damage** with regard to public trust in the objectivity of the state, public institutions and the functioning of the rule of law.
- Therefore, effective and efficient systems in **preventing corruption** as well as a proper **sanctioning system** need to be installed both on national level as well as through common cross border efforts.
- However, those systems will not suffice without **accompanying measures** such as awareness-raising, open communication systems, clear responsibilities, etc.
- Hence, Austria has increased its efforts in combating corruption. With regard to the work of UNODC, especially in relation to **UNCAC**<sup>2</sup>, **Austria** is currently **under review** in the second cycle of UNCAC. Furthermore, we are happy to be involved as reviewers of Sudan in the second cycle together with our esteemed colleagues from Morocco.
- The aim set out in the SDG 16 with its target 16.5 („*Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms*”) does not only reflect the efforts at international level in combating corruption, but in particular **the fight against corruption at the national level**. To this end, we are currently reviewing the body of anti-corruption criminal law with the aim of expanding the catalogue of criminal offences.
- Let me briefly touch upon another very important topic: **combatting human trafficking**. This crime constitutes a serious violation of human rights and human dignity.
- Human trafficking not only takes place worldwide, but also remains a **challenge in Austria**. Due to its location in the **center of Europe**, we are affected as a transit and destination country. Like in many other States, the most common forms of trafficking seem to be for the purpose of sexual exploitation, labor exploitation and child trafficking.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Convention against Corruption

- I therefore sincerely welcome the recent **launch of the review mechanism** of the implementation of the **UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime** and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. We are looking forward to Austria's review process, which will commence later this year.
- I also highly appreciate the **UNODC's** remarkable work in systematically **collecting and analyzing data** on trafficking for more than a decade. Its global reports on human trafficking have not only brought visibility to and raised awareness for this crime, but have also shed light on trafficking patterns and flows.
- Austria is strongly committed to **supporting victims** and **prosecuting offenders of human trafficking**. In this regard, the Ministry of Justice has been organizing an annual exchange of experiences and opinions with the participation of representatives of law enforcement agencies and victims' protection organizations on trafficking since 2013.
- Furthermore, Austria established an **anti-trafficking task force** with a view to coordinating and intensifying measures against human trafficking in 2004.
- As human trafficking can only be combatted effectively through international cooperation and partnerships, we must **tackle this challenge together**.
  
- Finally, I would like to draw your attention to our special event organised by Austria together with UN Women Serbia on the topic of domestic violence, to which you are cordially invited. Unfortunately, the recent femicides in Austria have shown us once again how important this issue is not only at the national, but also at the international level.