

30th Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

17-21 May 2021



Statement by the Kingdom of Belgium

President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen

1. The Belgium government endorses the Statement of the European Union. In addition I have the honour to highlight the following points on behalf of the Belgian Government.
2. Crime and aspects of criminal justice cannot only be addressed at national level. In the fight against transnational crime, the need for multilateralism is undisputed. We must continue to develop common standards in order to meet the growing challenges.
3. Therefore we would like to congratulate the Government of Japan on the successful 14th UN Crime Congress, which took place in March in Kyoto, and the adoption of the Kyoto Declaration
4. Belgium confirms the importance of human rights as a central idea. The administration of criminal justice and the rule of law depend on each other. This is the basis for the respect of fundamental rights; particularly the rights of women, children, and minorities. Therefore the abolition of the death penalty is important. There is no justification for the death penalty, on grounds both of legal ethics and of legal policy.
5. In October 2020 a coalition agreement was agreed. Let me elaborate on some of the priorities, for which Belgium has chosen for an integrated and integral approach.
6. First of all the fight against terrorism is a priority. Prevention, prosecution and partnership are the key elements. Prevention by focusing on the orientation and follow-up of people who have already been radicalised and emphasising the prevention of violent radicalisation. the resilience of vulnerable groups should be strengthened by positive activities education and sports clubs. Criminalising should not be limited to terrorist attacks only, but also, for example, the preparation of such an attack or the membership of a terrorist group. And at last partnership, various actors at different levels are specifically active in the field of terrorist threats.
7. For the fight against organised drugs gangs and international drug crime this means the importance of developing and strengthening specialised multidisciplinary drug investigation teams. The police authorities, customs, the social and fiscal inspection and the prosecutor's office should join their forces.

8. The fight against serious crime facilitated by ICT should also be enforced. Therefore law enforcement has to be strengthened and the digital knowledge of our citizens should be improved so that they are aware of the possible dangers by using the internet. In this way the world wide web will not be any more a safe haven for criminals and human rights abusers.

9. It goes without saying that the issues of smuggling in human beings and trafficking in human beings is among the priorities of the coalition agreement of October 2020. The Belgian government reaffirmed in its general policy statement the importance of combating human smuggling. It is determined to put in place the necessary measures to bring down this scourge which affects the most vulnerable.

10. Belgium has aligned its national legislation in 2005 with international – the Palermo Protocols - and European provisions. A clear distinction has been made between human trafficking and smuggling in human beings

11. As a as a country of destination and transit, and centrally located in the EU, Belgium is faced with persons residing illegally, an among them those who wishes to continue their journey within the EU and therefore we welcome the thematic discussion on smuggling in human beings.

12. On the policy level a first Action Plan against human smuggling was drafted in 2015. The next Action Plan will cover the period 2021-2025 and will be launched shortly. This plan underlines amongst others the need to strengthen the correct referral of victims of aggravated forms of smuggling in human beings. Belgium has a statute for victims of human trafficking. Also the “follow the money” principle is essential to disrupt this kind of crime. Belgium is full committed to invest in specialised judicial investigators for crimes in general to apply this principle so that crimes are tackled through the profits it generates. To tackle this crime guidelines where set up for magistrates and police. This circular will be evaluated. At last it also attached great importance on the international cooperation in this field.

13. Belgium is also committed to battle trafficking in human beings and this through a multilateral approach, because it is by definition impossible for a country to fight this transnational crime alone. Trafficking in human beings is a form of crime where criminal organisations take advantage of the vulnerability of others to exploit them. Thousands of children, women and men are trafficked and exploited, depriving them of their rights and basic dignity.

14. At the national level Belgium tries to continue its role as an international pioneer in the approach to human trafficking. In 2018 a specific action plan was dedicated to minors who are victims of human trafficking. It aims, next to the national action plan, to better react to the problem of minors who are victims of loverboys, to ensure a good referral of minors to specialised services and to improve the communication between youth welfare institutions and human trafficking stakeholders.

15. In 2019 Belgium included in the law, in addition to what was already foreseen in the criminal policy guidelines, a non-punishment clause for victims of trafficking. The fact that this is also included in the law is an additional guarantee for victims of trafficking that they will not be sanctioned for offences they have committed as a result of their exploitation.

16. To address this phenomenon, Belgium has contributed in 2019 two million euros to the United Nations Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking, in particular women and children.

17. With a donation of 2 million EURO Belgium is the biggest donor of the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking that helps victims of this crime , especially women and children, to put their lives back on the rails. Belgium is also a very active member of the blue heart campaign, aimed at raising awareness.

18. At last Belgium would also like to highlight the importance of the Resolutions that will be negotiated at this CCPJC in order to develop national and international strategies for criminal justice prevention. The fight against environmental crime is one of the Belgian priorities in this respect. Belgium will also present a side event “ Fighting poor-quality health products in times of COVID19 and beyond: the need for a multi-stakeholder approach” and we hope to see many of you there.