

DELEGATION OF ARMENIA

31<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

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Expert Discussions on Crimes that Affect the Environment

*Thematic session 1: Preventing crimes that affect the environment*

*Vienna, 14 February 2022*

Mr. Chair,

At the outset allow me to thank you for organizing this meeting as well as express our gratitude to the Secretariat for preparing the background note.

We also extend our gratitude to distinguished panelists for their very interesting presentations and for setting the stage for today's discussion.

As the environment knows no borders, the crimes that affect the environment are also of transboundary nature and when addressing such crimes, it is paramount to bear in mind the interconnections within the ecosystem and their long-term impact on our future generations.

Therefore, the prevention and combating of such crimes require collective efforts of the international community.

Mr. Chair,

We believe that for effective policies to prevent and counter crimes that affect the environment, it is important to take the wider picture of the situation with

the rule of law, democratic governance and accountability within public sector, as the deficiencies in those areas could be key enablers for corruption and economic crime and their interlinkages with crimes that affect the environment.

In this context a major role could be attributed to civil society, NGOs and different stakeholders outside government sector such as the academia, media and in particular - investigative journalism, which could be the key actors for ringing the bell and raising public awareness about the harms that the deficiencies of governance could have for the environment. Needless to say, all this could be achieved only in the environment of full respect and protection of freedom of expression and other fundamental rights.

The larger picture also requires us to look into the values and priorities of the actors which are engaged in the exploitation of natural resources in unsustainable manner for short-term profits, which entail environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. This could increase our knowledge and targeted responses to crimes that affect the environment.

It has been perfectly articulated by many panelists and presenters that one of the key root causes of the crimes that affect the environment is considered to be corruption, which creates conducive preconditions for criminals to easily carry out their illegal activities and maintain trafficking routes and illicit financial flows.

**Another important point** here is that in many cases seemingly legal activities in the field of environmental exploitation could bear hidden instances of corruption, misappropriation of the generated wealth and its diversion through money laundering to offshores and safe havens for other illegal activities, such as financing of terrorism.

It has become especially obvious after the recent major revelations of investigative journalism regarding large scale corruption and money laundering, which made it obvious that the immense amount of illicit financial flows derived from corruption were in fact originating from the unrestricted and unsustainable exploitation of mineral resources.

Therefore, the crimes that affect the environment should in many instances be considered as predicate crimes, which are part of larger criminality, including corruption, money laundering and other forms of crime.

And when considering the policies to prevent crimes against the environment there is a need to address also the interlinkages with other forms of crime

Thank you, Mr. Chair