

**Statement of the Republic of Austria
for the General Debate of the 31st Session of the Commission
on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
by Ambassador Gabriela Sellner**

Austria fully aligns herself with the Statement made by the EU and would like to add the following comments in her national capacity.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Let me first congratulate you, Mr. Chair, upon your election and assure you of Austria's full support during your chairmanship of the 31st session of the CCPCJ.

Austria stands in full solidarity and support with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified act of aggression against Ukraine which grossly violates international law and the UN Charter.

For the past two years, experts and criminal justice practitioners from across all regions have addressed the Commission with a very similar message: the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated and exacerbated global trends in organised crime. As much of our activities shifted online, cybercrime emerged as an increasingly menacing threat to the economic development and prosperity of all of us. Cybercriminals are attacking our private sector, administrations and critical infrastructures with growing frequency, scale and sophistication. In this context, Austria welcomes that the focus of this year's thematic discussions is on strengthening the use of digital evidence in criminal justice and countering the problem of online abuse and exploitation of minors. As cybercrime can only be combatted effectively through international cooperation and partnerships, we must tackle this challenge together.

Austria also notes with great concern the recent UNODC report on the risks of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants affecting people fleeing the war in Ukraine. Women and children, in particular, are vulnerable to falling victims to traffickers for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation. On April 21st 2022, the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, Joint

Operational Office organized together with UNODC the workshop “Trafficking in Human Beings Ukraine – Challenges and Outlook”, which resulted in the establishment of the Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings Ukraine. The aim is to ensure a better exchange of information.

Last year our own national anti-trafficking task force adopted Austria’s 6th National Action Plan, upgrading efforts in prevention, victim protection and monitoring. We will distribute some hard copies in the plenary. On the 13th of October, we are organising our yearly conference against trafficking; the topic will be “No Future for Human Trafficking”. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all to the conference to further unite our efforts in combating the heinous crime that is human trafficking.

Lastly, protection of the environment has been a high priority in Austria for many decades. As environmental crimes cause significant damage to the environment and to human health, effective protection of the environment by means of criminal law becomes increasingly important. It is a fact that damage caused by environmental crimes does not stop at national borders. Therefore, the issue also needs to be addressed on an international level. In this context, Austria supports the recent proposal of a new Environmental Crime Directive by the European Commission as part of the European Green Deal and the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and also actively participates in the work within the Council of Europe on a potential new instrument on the protection of the environment through Criminal Law.

To conclude, I wish to acknowledge the excellent work of the UNODC staff here in Vienna and in the field offices and thank Executive Director, Ms. Ghada Waly, for her commitment in steering the Office throughout challenging times.