

Delegation of the Republic of Armenia
31st Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal
Justice

Vienna, 16-20 May 2022

Statement at the general debate

Mr. Chair,

I would like to start by congratulating H.E. Ambassador Hikihara for his election as the Chair of the CCPCJ at its 31st session and other members of the Bureau. We also thank the Secretariat for their efforts in the lead-up to the current session.

Armenia values the important mandate of the UNODC and the CCPCJ (Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice) as the primary UN entity tasked with assisting member states in preventing crime and depriving criminals of safe havens. This mandate becomes even more important today, when the international community through the United Nations has endeavored to build back better from COVID-19, while advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

There were significant advances in our individual and collective crime prevention efforts, but we need to redouble them. Despite advancing our criminal justice systems and improving our legislative frameworks and preventive mechanisms, such crimes as drug trafficking, corruption, organized crime, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, as well as institutionalized violence based on discrimination, hate crimes, crimes against cultural property and terrorism in its different forms and manifestations continue to cause human suffering and deprivation.

In this sense we welcome the efforts of the Government of Japan to work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in ensuring appropriate follow-up to the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration, including through the relevant resolution which will be adopted during the current session of the Commission.

Mr. Chair,

Preventing terrorism and addressing conditions conducive to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations are crucial for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

This issue has always been a priority for the international community. However, terrorism is constantly evolving, and new forms and manifestations of terrorism emerge.

The most recent case is the upsurge in the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters and their subsequent transfer across international borders for engagement in an armed conflict. Well-organized structures were put in action to carry out such recruitment, usually from among the ranks of organizations affiliated to Da'esh, al-Qaeda and Al Nusra Front.

We believe that due to its sophisticated nature, this crime should be addressed also from the criminal justice perspective to ensure that our systems remain strong and agile to counter such evolution of terrorism. We need to understand all aspects of this crime, starting from illicit financial flows, illegal border crossings up to the diversion of firearms to foreign terrorist fighters.

First and foremost, states should address the deficiencies in our criminal justice systems. However, in order to effectively respond to, prevent, investigate and prosecute such crimes, the reliance on national efforts alone might not be enough, and we need the expertise of relevant international organizations to analyze the criminal justice aspects of this crime and identify the gaps in national or even international systems.

Mr. Chair,

Hate crimes, hate speech and the resulting discrimination are important topics, which we believe should remain in the focus of the UNODC and the CCPCJ.

Furthermore, the Commission should remain seized on the issue of crimes directed against the cultural heritage and cultural property, such as the destruction or desecration of monuments or objects of cultural, religious or national heritage, which infringe the principle of human dignity and human rights and therefore should be considered and treated as serious crimes.

The issue of protection of cultural property from intentional destruction and desecration, derived from racial hatred and discrimination has been a

painful concern for Armenia, as our rich cultural property, including medieval churches, monasteries, distinctive national monuments, such as khachkars, and other cultural sites are being completely destroyed in the light of the day and without any reprimanding. The deficiencies of international norms and systems, and the lack of robust response mechanisms allow the perpetrators to avoid justice by hiding behind the walls of sovereignty.

Mr. Chair,

We welcome the thematic discussion of the current session on the use of digital evidence in criminal justice and countering cybercrime and hope that it will provide valuable insights and proposals on how to improve the capacities at national, regional and international levels for the handling of digital evidence for the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

At the same time availability of evidence does not necessarily lead to prosecution, which is exactly the case of the 44-days war of aggression against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in 2020, which has been accompanied with violations of the international law, international humanitarian law, but most importantly by committing crimes falling within the mandate of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Although there are numerous facts and electronic evidence available to national criminal justice authorities for investigation and prosecution of the mentioned crimes, so far we have not seen any real and genuine action to bring the perpetrators to justice, which speaks about the state's complicity to these crimes.

To conclude Mr. Chair,

We believe that the character, agility and strength of the human society and institutions at all levels is shaped by the resolve we take and the deeds we do to counter crimes, to hold criminals accountable and prevent the abuse of our national and international systems by criminals.

Thank you Mr. Chair.