

## **Delegation of the Republic of Armenia**

### **32nd Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)**

*Vienna, 22 May 2023*

#### **Statement at the general debate**

Madame Chair,

I would like to start by thanking H.E. Ambassador Mary Mugwanja, the Chair of the CCPCJ at its 32<sup>st</sup> session and the Secretariat for all their efforts.

Armenia values the important mandate of the CCPCJ (Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice) as one of the governing bodies of the UNODC. We are glad to acknowledge that the UNODC with the support of its governing commissions and under the leadership of Executive Director Ghada Waly continues to devise and implement key strategies and programmes in addressing many persistent but also new and evolving forms of crime as envisaged in the UNODC strategy for 2021-2025. This work becomes even more important today, when so many issues on the international agenda starting from armed conflict to the environment are shaped and greatly impacted by different forms of crime, corruption and terrorism.

Armenia welcomes the resolution on the preparation for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. We also welcome the overall theme and topics of the 15<sup>th</sup> UN Crime Congress on “Accelerating crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: Protecting people and planet and achieving the sustainable development goals in the digital age”.

We believe that the Crime Congress should continue to serve as a forum for exchange of views between governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and experts for identifying and elaborating

effective frameworks of the cooperation against new and emerging trends and issues in crime prevention and criminal justice.

Madame Chair,

Corruption and economic crime continue to drain the wealth of societies drawing the most vulnerable further into poverty. In some cases, it also serves as a major driver for armed conflict as the corrupt regimes in power frequently revert to aggression as a method of diversion of the attention of their society from the unabated theft of its wealth and the resulting misery of the people. The situation in our region could serve as a textbook example for such an impact of corruption on regional peace and security. Therefore, the fight against corruption should be viewed from a wider angle of bringing prosperity to the societies but also conflict prevention and peace. And for the success of our efforts we need to listen to the voices of all stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, private sector, academia and investigative journalists.

Armenia looks forward to the 10 session of the States parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption to be held later this year in the United States of America, with a hope that this anniversary session would serve as a major milestone for the new vision against corruption and economic crime from the perspective of peace and prosperity.

Another menace for the peace remains terrorism which continues to threaten our societies and undermines the prospects for development in many regions. No matter how much we try to bring our forces together, and regardless of ever invigorating international mechanisms and efforts, we continue to witness new and evolving forms of terrorism. In some regions terrorism is becoming more and more entangled with different regimes and serves as a military arm for the furtherance of their regional policies and agendas. The transformative process of terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters into income driven mercenarism is another new phenomena, which we have witnessed within the last few years. Although such a transformation especially in the context of ongoing conflicts could not occur without the invisible hand of corrupt regimes, the active engagement of

organized crime in the facilitation and logistical arrangement of such transformation is also a major concern. Against this background we value the increased focus of the UNODC's new Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Terrorism on increasing member states' institutional capacities to identify and address the links between terrorism and organized crime, financing of terrorism and enhancing cross-border cooperation related to foreign terrorist fighters. We believe that it is important to improve our understanding of the nexus between organized crime and terrorism, including the linkages between illicit financial flows, trafficking in firearms and ammunition and various forms of organized crime, terrorism and armed conflict.

Madame Chair,

Hate crime, hate speech and resulting discrimination are important topics, which we believe should be in the center of attention of UNODC and the CCPCJ. The massive atrocities and gross violations of basic human rights in different parts of the world, especially against civilian populations in times of armed conflicts, the reluctance of countries to conduct proper investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice is an alarming issue which should be at the center of attention for the Commission and the international community as whole.

The Commission should remain seized of the crimes directed against 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.

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 some parts of our region. 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 state complicity.

Madame Chair,

Equal access to justice for all is important for ensuring the resilience of societies against crime and their trust in the criminal justice system.

Unfortunately, today there are places where even basic human rights, such as the right to food, freedom of movement, education and other rights are blatantly violated. In such circumstances the access to justice at all levels and more importantly at the international level is being brutally infringed by preventing international engagement and aid from reaching those who need them most, and whose voices are the least heard.

One of such places today is Nagorno-Karabakh, the people of which have to endure yet another aggression and infringement upon their basic human rights and security as a result of the criminal blockade by Azerbaijan. The deliberate aim of the blockade is to inflict on the people of Nagorno-Karabakh conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part or to achieve its forced deportation which is a blatant crime, punishable under the international criminal law.

Madame Chair,

We cannot pretend that the international mechanisms designed to ensure access to justice are sufficient, while one particular member-state of the United Nations is deliberately and brutally infringing upon the most basic human rights of people of Nagorno-Karabakh, due to intolerance and xenophobia towards Armenians.

The relevant international structures must demonstrate a strong determination and conduct result-oriented and people-centered actions to ensure the prevalence of the rule of law and the access to justice for all.

Thank you