

**Statement of the Republic of Austria  
for the General Debate of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission  
on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice**

**by Ambassador Gabriela Sellner**

Chair, colleagues,

Let me first congratulate you, Madame Chair, and the other newly elected bureau members upon your election and assure you of Austria's full support during your chairmanship of the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the CCPCJ. We thank the former Chair Ambassador Hikiyama from Japan and his bureau members for their excellent work during the past year.

Austria fully aligns herself with the Statement made by the EU, including on what has been said on the war in Ukraine. We would like to add the following in national capacity.

Austria notes with great concern the recent UNODC report on the risks of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants affecting people fleeing conflict settings. UNHCR recorded more than 8 million refugees from Ukraine across Europe. Especially women and children are vulnerable to falling victims to traffickers for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation. Already on 21 April 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" aiming at a better exchange of information.

In 2021, our own national anti-trafficking task force adopted Austria's 6<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan, upgrading efforts in prevention, victim protection and monitoring. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2022, we organised our yearly conference against trafficking, entitled "No Future for Human Trafficking" and were grateful for the valuable contribution of Executive Director Ghada Waly during the conference.

Furthermore, we highly welcome this year's thematic focus on enhancing the functioning of criminal justice systems to ensure access to justice and to further realise safe and secure societies. While many factors contribute to a well-functioning and equal justice system, we want to highlight one specific aspect, which is the equal representation within criminal justice offices and other relevant institutions. As highlighted on the second International Day of Women Judges on 9 March by UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly and the Austrian Minister of Justice, Alma Zadić, there is no justice without gender equality as only an inclusive judiciary can be strong enough to face challenges, which threaten the resilience of justice systems.

More gender balance will ensure greater accountability, citizen's trust in the system and furthermore peaceful societies with access to justice for all. In order to achieve these ambitious goals, adequate measures are necessary. In the Austrian public service, the federal entities, including the supreme federal bodies are obliged to issue plans for the advancement of women. The respective plans for the advancement of women must specify the time, personnel and training measures to be taken to eliminate existing underrepresentation of women and disadvantages faced by women.

This year marks the 20-year anniversary of the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, also known as "Palermo Convention". The Convention was adopted in 2000 by the UN General Assembly and entered into force on 9 September 2003. Today, 20 years later, the Convention, supplemented by three additional Protocols, has become one of the most widely adhered to international treaties, with 191 parties, reaching almost universal adherence. The Convention represents a major step forward in the fight against transnational organized crime and the recognition by Member States of the seriousness of the problems posed by it. As we enter the third decade after its entry into force, it is clear that organized crime remains a complex phenomenon that must be addressed in a multi-faceted manner, including through strategic evidence-based, coordinated whole-of-society responses that build upon the Convention.

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