

**Statement by Ambassador HAM Sangwook  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea  
at the 32nd Session of the  
Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice  
Vienna, 22–26 May 2023**

Madam Chair,

I would like to extend my congratulations to you on your election at this 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the CCPCJ. I have full confidence that your excellent leadership will help us achieve a fruitful outcome this week. I also thank the Secretariat for preparing this hybrid session, which we expect will be a meaningful opportunity to make further progress in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice.

Madam Chair,

According to many reports published by UNODC, the unprecedented experience of Covid-19 caused not only severe human and economic damage but also had significant impact on transnational organized crime and corruption.

We know that corruption thrives in times of crisis, and the Covid-19 pandemic was no exception. Indeed, as the Secretary-General observed in his statement on corruption in the context of Covid-19, the pandemic response created new opportunities to exploit weak oversight and inadequate transparency. In order to avoid a global economic collapse, for example, many countries responded with emergency rescue packages for their people and businesses in need. In the course of allocating vast amounts of resources, opportunities for corrupt practices such as embezzlement, bribes and so on flourished and evolved. In addition, more and more criminals transfer and hide their money through virtual assets in foreign countries, and the differences in our criminal asset recovery systems, including virtual assets, makes it difficult to recover criminal assets.

In this respect, the Republic of Korea would like to use this opportunity to share some of our achievements to implement the recommendations set forth in the various conventions and resolutions of the UNODC.

Madam Chair,

Due to cutting edge criminal methods and the lack of specialty expertise to counter such methods, large scale financial crime is becoming ever harder to detect and prosecute. In response to this concern, in September 2022, the Republic of Korea established the Special Investigation Team on National Finance Crimes in collaboration with the Prosecution Service, Korea Customs Service, the Korea Financial Supervisory Service and municipalities. The Special Investigation Team will focus on large-scale tax evasion and financial crime related to government subsidies and will conduct robust joint investigations in a wide range of areas.

Madam Chair,

Covid-19 hasn't just fueled corruption; it has also limited opportunities to travel and hold in-person meetings, which has posed a challenge to networking and cooperation in the area of mutual legal assistance.

In response, the Republic of Korea has been supporting the program for "Enhancement of Crime Response Capacity and Cooperation among Southeast Asian Countries" through UNODC contributions since 2021. The "South East Asia Justice Network", or "SEAJust" for short, is an important part of this program. To strengthen international collaboration, Korea joined SEAJust this January. Moreover, Korea recently co-hosted the first in-person plenary meeting of SEAJust in Seoul with the UNODC.

Many non-member countries, including the United States, China, Japan, and Mongolia, and regional cooperation networks such as Eurojust, EJM, and CASC, attended this meeting too. It was a meaningful chance to increase mutual

understanding and build strong friendships across the world. I believe that SEAJust will grow into a pillar of global cooperation networks for expeditious execution of mutual legal assistance requests.

Madam Chair,

The Republic of Korea is determined to play a constructive role in facilitating regional and international cooperation in countering the increasingly evolving forms transnational organized crime and corruption. To this end, the Republic of Korea will strengthen its partnerships with the UNODC and other stakeholders and enhance its contributions to global crime prevention and criminal justice efforts.

I thank you, Madam Chair. /END/