



**Statement by Ambassador Barbara Žvokelj,
Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the UN
at the 32nd Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
(Agenda Item 3 - General Debate, full version)
Vienna, 22-26 March 2022**

Ms. Chairperson,

In addition to what has been said by Sweden on behalf of the European Union, I would like to make some comments in my national capacity.

First of all, I would like to point out the pressing situation endured by the people of Ukraine. I would like to underline that Slovenia condemns in the strongest possible terms the unjustified and unlawful war against Ukraine. Impunity for international crimes is directly connected to this and remains a very serious threat to the rule of law, as it undermines our efforts to protect and preserve human life, dignity, and fundamental rights. It is our duty to hold the perpetrators accountable and to deliver justice for the victims. This is why Slovenia supports the establishment of an appropriate mechanism for the prosecution of the crime of aggression and welcomes the new International Centre for Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA).

Slovenia has been a long-standing supporter of establishing mutual legal assistance in relation to the investigation and prosecution of the most serious crimes. We are pleased that after more than a decade of efforts by Argentina, Belgium, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Senegal and Slovenia, an international diplomatic conference is taking place in Ljubljana, right at this moment, to negotiate the text of the Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and Other International Crimes (MLA Convention). High level of participation by supporters of the Convention – with representatives from 71 countries and a total of 80 supporting States as well numerous representatives of international organisations and civil society organisations – is a reflection of our shared commitment to ensuring accountability and ending impunity for the most serious crimes. We hope that the Conference can represent a

decisive step forward in strengthening the political will and capacity of States to investigate and prosecute such crimes.

Ms. Chairperson,

Another area where international efforts need to be intensified, including by means of criminal law, is protection of the environment. A reminder of that is also the World Bee Day, which was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2017, at the initiative of Slovenia, with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and that we celebrated last Saturday (20th May). Bees and other pollinators are key to healthy ecosystems. Aligned with 2030 Agenda as well as the deliberations of the Climate Conference COP27, UNODC and CCPCJ have already recognised the pressing need to effectively address environmental crime, including by providing valuable analytical data on global trends concerning such crimes and by providing trainings and other useful tools for empowering Member States to effectively fight these crimes. However, we would like to stress the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach in this field, that is taking into account all crimes that affect the environment, and not solely some of them.

Ms. Chairperson,

Achieving equal access to justice for all is crucial. Certain members of society, such as children and victims of violence, are more vulnerable when in contact with the criminal justice system. It is therefore essential to adopt approaches in criminal proceedings, taking into consideration rights, dignity and best interests of the most vulnerable individuals. In this regard, I would like to note, as an exemplary practice, that Slovenia has recently established a safe house for children, based on the Scandinavian Barnahus model. It provides a safe, child-friendly space, together with comprehensive medical, psychological and social support services, as well as specifically trained criminal justice professionals, for conducting forensic interviews with children.

We have been also intensifying efforts to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence, particularly violence against women and girls. The Slovenian Criminal Code has recently been amended introducing a so called »affirmative consent model« for rape and sexual violence offences. The

provisions are now aligned with the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and the domestic violence).

Ms. Chairperson,

To conclude, we believe in addressing the challenges of the international criminal law through international cooperation. Progress must be based on the respect for human rights, verifiable facts, and promotion of a broad dialogue between all stakeholders. Equal access to justice for all, protection of the environment and gender-equality are the topics of our priority and I am pleased to report that Slovenia is looking into supporting UNODC in these areas. They will also be our priorities in the UN SC, if you elect us on 6 June. I would like to thank you for your support in advance.

And I thank you, Ms Chairperson.