

United States of America

Delivered by

**Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Maggie H. Nardi
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
U.S. Department of State**

Thank you, Ms. Chair.

The United States is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the 32nd UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. We value this Commission's work to lead the development of international policy related to crime prevention and criminal justice, and we welcome the thematic focus on enhancing the functioning of the criminal justice system to ensure access to justice and to realize a safe and secure society.

It must be stated that this important conversation is overshadowed by Russia's unprovoked, full-scale war against Ukraine. It is challenging for us to discuss access to justice when Russia's actions continue to significantly disrupt basic protections for Ukrainian citizens, such as access to justice, as well as the enjoyment of a safe and secure society. We urge Russia to immediately cease its unlawful and unprovoked aggression in Ukraine.

While horrific and reprehensible, Russia's actions will not deter our critical work in this Commission. We look forward to expert driven discussions on the Crime Commission's thematic focus. Ensuring access to justice for all requires a "people-centered" approach, which prioritizes reforms based on meaningful, consistent, and accessible engagement with individuals and communities, including underrepresented groups.

Access to justice is most effectively advanced in the United States and globally by addressing systemic inequities within legal systems and removing barriers to justice faced by underserved communities. These reforms ensure effective, fair, humane, trauma-informed, and accountable criminal justice systems which uphold equity, dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms for all, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion, domestically and around the world. To further these goals, in 2021, U.S. Attorney General Garland restored the stand-alone Office for Access to Justice with the U.S. Department of Justice, to make the promise of equal justice real, for all.

In addition to discussions on access to justice, we also look forward to continuing preparations for the 15th UN Crime Congress. The Congress offers an opportunity for Member States to consider emerging and evolving challenges, such as synthetic drugs, cybercrime, corruption, gender-based violence, and crimes that affect the environment.

During the Congress, we have the privilege of exploring innovative and effective, data-driven responses to these new challenges and others, together with outside stakeholders.

The Congress has a longstanding history of offering a venue for expert exchange among a variety of stakeholders, including governments, practitioners, academia, and civil society. This exchange helps to ensure our crime prevention and criminal justice policies are comprehensive and take into account a variety of perspectives.

Civil society plays a critical role in the Commission and the Congress. Member States benefit from hearing directly from these organizations, and their unique experience, expertise, and diverse perspectives. We should be on guard for attempts to shrink civil society participation in Vienna-based counterdrug and anti-crime fora. It is only with their partnership that we can truly identify challenges and generate ways to solve them.

We look forward to a productive week. Only together will we solve the world's toughest challenges. Thank you.