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CND/CCPCJ special event in honour of the President of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly

23 August 2019

Madame President of the General Assembly,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome the President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly, H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, to Vienna.

This is a special chance to hear from President Espinosa, who has led the GA during a challenging time, when the international community is seeking progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and struggling with global issues of climate change and plastic pollution, migration and much more.

It is also symbolic, Madame President, that you came to us on 23 August, exactly on the day when 40 years ago, in 1979, the Vienna International Centre was officially handed over to the UN by the Government of Austria.

The 40th anniversary of UN headquarters in Vienna this year, leading into the celebrations for 75 years of our United Nations next year, is an opportune moment to reflect on how we can contribute to the wider goals of our organization.

That includes of course the work of the Vienna-based commissions that set policies on drugs, crime prevention and criminal justice, corruption and terrorism. And it includes the efforts of the UN family of organizations at the Vienna International Centre, from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and its mandates addressing global transnational challenges, to the agencies here focusing on outer space affairs, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and non-proliferation as well as industrial development.

The UN organizations in Vienna are diverse but we are united under the SDGs. Here we take our lead from the GA and from President Espinosa, who has emphasized the importance of system-wide cooperation and breaking silos.

As the first woman from Latin America to serve as PGA, and in fact only the fourth woman to do so, not to mention a distinguished career as a minister, diplomat and academic, you have considerable personal experience of pushing past boundaries to achieve progress.

Your leadership during the seventy-third session to advance gender equality and youth participation has been very much appreciated.

Through your active engagement, you have helped to ensure that governments and people around the world understand that the UN is as relevant and needed as ever.

For UNODC, we have seen a welcome and increasing recognition of the links between the broader goals of the UN and the areas under our mandate - that balanced approaches to drugs and cooperation to prevent and counter shared threats of organized crime, terrorism and corruption are essential to achieving peaceful, just, equitable and sustainable societies.

Madame President, we look forward to hearing your insights. Thank you.