



REMARKS BY

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

MARÍA FERNANDA ESPINOSA GARCÉS

**SPECIAL EVENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40th
ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE:
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE VIENNA COMMISSIONS TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”**

Jointly organized by the CND and CCPCJ

23 August 2019, Vienna International Centre

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Thank you for organizing this event, and I am delighted to see such a full room on a Friday afternoon in August!

Mr Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and Director-General of the UN Office in Vienna,

Your Excellency, **Ambassador Alena Kupchyna**, Chair of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice,

Your Excellency, **Ambassador Mirghani Abbaker Altayeb Bakhet**, Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

Our moderator this afternoon, **Mr Martin Nesirky**, Director of the UN Information Service in Vienna,

Excellencies, representatives of civil society and youth groups her today, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to join you for this special event to mark the **40th anniversary of the Vienna International Centre** on this very day – the 23rd of August – and to discuss the vital contributions of the **Vienna Commissions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

I am so grateful to Director-General Fedotov for the invitation, and also of course to the CND and CCPCJ for co-hosting this event in cooperation with UNODC and UNIS, and to the Government of Austria for facilitating my visit to this beautiful city, which seems to have as many desserts as it has diplomats, I have to say!

For four decades now, Vienna has hosted one of the UN's four headquarters – building on its centuries-old history as a **capital of diplomacy**, its role as a **bridge-builder between East and West**, and its **own journey of reflection and renewal** following the Second World War.

This journey was still very fresh in the 1950s and 60s, when the Austrian Government invited the **International Atomic Energy Agency** and the **United Nations Industrial Development Organization** to establish their headquarters here, with the Cold War in full swing.

And here, I would like to take a moment to express again my sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Yukiya Amano, the late Director-General of the IAEA, who died just last month.

He will be remembered for his principled leadership and sound judgement, for his handling of the international response to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, and for increasing international confidence in IAEA nuclear safeguards. From my side, I will remember him – and I had the privilege to meet him several times in different capacities - as a committed International Gender Champion, who oversaw a rise of female professional employees from 23% to 29% during his tenure. In this, and in so many other ways, his legacy endures.

Dear Friends,

When the Vienna International Centre opened in 1979, it was a year marked by significant **political upheaval** around the world, by fear of **nuclear and terrorist attacks**, and by the **worst oil spill** the world had seen to date. But it was also a year of progress – the SALT II agreement was signed in

Vienna; China and the US established full diplomatic relations; and Jupiter's rings were first observed. Since then, the "UNO [*pronounced Ooo-noh*] City" has played a **crucial** role in many achievements of the multilateral system: from the creation of the **Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty** to the role of UNIDO in supporting **South-South cooperation**.

It has been a home for **intergovernmental** discussions on nuclear issues. It has provided platforms for **cooperation** in fields such as outer space and business law. It has established bodies to **support** Member States in addressing threats posed by drugs, by crime and corruption, by trafficking and terrorism.

And the results? Forty years ago, few people would have thought that the number of nuclear-armed states would be limited to **single** digits. And even fewer – if any – would have imagined the need for cooperation to tackle **cybercrime**.

Excellencies and friends,

Much of the work undertaken in Vienna is specialist, showcasing the UN's ability to harness expertise from across the world. But it is certainly not "niche". It is essential for achieving our shared vision of more peaceful, just and sustainable societies.

For instance, last month, UNODC's **Global Study on Homicide** reported that some 464,000 people across the world were victims of homicidal violence in 2017 – more than **five** times the number killed in armed conflict over the same period, and more than the **total** deaths caused by conflict and terrorism combined. And nearly one in five murders is linked to organized crime.

This year's **World Drug Report**, meanwhile, indicates that the number of people who use drugs – around 35 million worldwide – is now about 30 per cent **higher** than it was 10 years ago.

Addressing both crises requires an **inclusive, inter-sectoral** approach that straddles multiple Sustainable Development Goals, as mentioned by previous speakers. Solving them would provide a significant boost to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

And these are just two examples. There is the work of the **IAEA**, which is even more important today as we contend with greater multipolarity and polarization. There is the work of **UNCITRAL** on international trade law – which has also taken on greater significance in the context of shifting global power dynamics. The list could go on and on.

Earlier today, I was grateful to have the opportunity to meet with Director-General Fedotov, to discuss how we can foster greater **coherence** between work done in the four UN Headquarters locations, and between the work undertaken here and global efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

One route, of course, is through the UN General Assembly, that is our parliament. As the most democratic and representative principal organ of the UN, the Assembly is uniquely positioned to provide political leadership; to galvanize action, including through its Third and Sixth Committees, which discuss crime, drugs and related issues; and to adopt a holistic approach to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

At the same time, its decisions must be supported by sound evidence and advice from experts and other stakeholders. This is something I have advocated in almost every major speech and put into practice in events I have organized.

And the work of the Vienna Commissions has informed the **priorities set out for the 73rd session** of the General Assembly: from statistics on trafficking in relation to the Assembly's focus on migrants and refugees, to the impact of drugs on mental and physical disabilities – to give just two examples. I very much hope that these links, this collaboration, can be deepened as we enter the **“decade for delivery”** of the SDGs.

I am extremely grateful for UNODC's role as a custodian, in cooperation with other UN entities, for 15 SDG indicators relating to Goals 3, 5, 11, 15 and 16, covering violence and crime prevention, trafficking and organized crime, justice, the rule of law and corruption, as well as drug treatment.

I also commend UNODC for its consistent efforts to build strong partnerships with other UN agencies, international and regional organizations and civil society. We will not achieve the 2030 Agenda unless we dramatically scale up partnerships at the global, regional, sub-regional and country levels.

I must also recognize the crucial work of the **Commission on Narcotic Drugs**, including in follow-up to the 2016 General Assembly Special Session, that was just mentioned. At the 62nd session of the CND in March, Ministers adopted a wide-ranging declaration covering issues from HIV to money-

laundering, all of which are interlinked with the SDGs.

Similarly, the work of the **Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice** in advancing justice and fostering resilient institutions, is essential not just to the achievement of Goal 16 but to the whole of the 2030 Agenda. I welcome the upcoming 14th Crime Congress in Kyoto next year, and its focus on advancing crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dear friends,

As we move through this turbulent period for the world, it is essential that we harness the strengths and expertise of every part of the UN system. The UN family in Vienna must be at the heart of the

international community's response to the challenges we face – and at the centre of efforts to achieve the future we want and need. It is therefore clear that the best way to respond to global challenges is through a **strong and efficient multilateral system, with the UN as its beating heart.**

It is crucially important that as we do so to respond challenges that touch every aspect of the lives and livelihoods of people and our planet, we work together as a one UN System to bring our work closer to the people and to make the UN relevant for all, which has been my priority during this year's presidency of the General Assembly.

And I thank you for your attention