

14th UN CONGRESS ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law:
Towards The Achievement of the 2030 Agenda

Belgian National Statement

H.E. Vincent Van Quickenborne
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice and the North Sea

March 8th, 2021

Madam Chair,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Let me first **thank and congratulate the government of Japan and the UNODC Secretariat** for hosting and organizing this 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in such exceptional circumstances.
2. Belgium fully **supports the Kyoto Declaration** and thanks the Permanent Representative of Japan and his team for their guidance during the negotiations in Vienna.
3. We also align ourselves with the **statement made by the EU**.
4. There can be **no sustainable development without justice** indeed. Effective, accountable and transparent institutions are paramount to protect human rights, including socio-economic rights. Corruption and the most serious forms of crime – such as terrorism or drug trafficking – are standing in the way of prosperity in various parts of the world. Achieving our Sustainable Development Goals will require decisive actions to tackle those issues, both at the national and the international level.
5. Transnational organised crime cannot be fought alone. Belgium firmly believes in **multilateralism and international cooperation**. The EU, the Council of Europe and the UN

have all provided us with robust instruments for international criminal cooperation. We need to build on this acquis, including within UNODC.

6. In a few days, Belgium will commemorate the 5th anniversary of the attacks in Brussels. Too many countries and families have been plunged into mourning by **terrorists and violent extremists**. We must end this plague. Fighting radicalisation and incitement to hate – including online – has become a top priority in this regard.
7. **Human trafficking** is typically the type of crime that results from socio-economic misery and leads to aggravated forms of exploitation. Our support to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons demonstrates our commitment to the victims and our willingness to bring perpetrators to justice.
8. **The COVID-19 crisis has put our judicial systems under pressure**. They had to adapt to keep up and running in unprecedented circumstances. The pandemic also highlighted certain forms of criminality.
9. Lockdown measures led to more **domestic violence** in 2020. In Belgium, temporary house bans have proven to be a useful tool to prevent escalation in family tensions [and irremediable damage]. Domestic violence is not just a private matter.
10. Getting our societies back to normality is urgent. Vaccines and other **medical products** will play an important role. Making sure they are safe and reliable – and perceived as such [by the wider population] – is more important than ever. The UNTOC resolution on combatting counterfeit medical products adopted last year under the impetus of Belgium is an important breakthrough and needs to be followed up.
11. Finally, Belgium wants to strengthen measures against **crimes that have an impact on the environment**. 2 million euros already granted to UNODC to help combatting corruption and crime against wild fauna and forests in Africa. We are keen to explore no ways to address this issue.

12. I thank you and wish you all a fruitful Congress.