Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

STATEMENT
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QATAR
Your Highness,
Secretary General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Mr Chairperson,

First of all, allow me to express my sincere congratulations, Mr Chairperson, upon your election. I am confident that under your guidance and with the assistance of the other members of the Committee, we will successfully accomplish the comprehensive work ahead of us.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my warm congratulations and gratitude to the Government of Qatar for the kind hospitality and for the excellent organisation of the Congress.

Let me begin by stating that the Republic of Croatia associates itself fully with the statement made by the European Union. I will just add a few remarks and briefly address several issues that are of special importance to my country.

Mr Chairperson,

Croatia welcomes the comprehensive work of the UN System Task Team for the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda and supports the vision for the future based on the three core values - human rights, equality and sustainability. We will give our full and complete support to the United Nations in performing the leading role in achieving these goals.

As for the human rights issues we firmly believe that fair and effective criminal justice systems should be based on respect and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In that regard Croatia continues to seek actively effective ways to promote tolerance, equality and combat all forms of discrimination. We have shown readiness to embrace international standards,
and to introduce innovative legal and institutional mechanisms for promoting and protecting human rights. In the context of criminal justice, these standards include due respect for defendants' rights, including the right to a lawyer and consular assistance from the outset of the proceedings and effective rights at all further stages of procedure. At the same time, we must not forget that victims' rights deserve special attention and new solutions, such as their active role in the proceedings, adequate support mechanisms and compensation schemes.

Croatia reiterates the importance of integration of children and youth issues into the overall rule of law. It is our sincere belief that these categories deserve special attention and protection. Furthermore, we support measures which will include a gender perspective into law systems in order to promote the full protection of women and girls from all acts of violence, including femicide and sexual violence, in accordance with obligations under the CEDAW Convention and the UN Security Council resolution 1325.

In addition to the gravest violations of women's rights I would like to emphasize a challenge of achieving "de facto" equality – which implies empowerment of women and realisation of substantive equality between women and men in all areas of life. This includes attaining economic independence of women, and promoting equal representation in the decision-making process.

Mr Chairperson
Acknowledging the problems arising from the challenge of prison overcrowding I would like to mention that in recent years Croatia has made significant improvements regarding the treatment of prison inmates. The result of these efforts is a continuous reduction of number of prison inmates (from 5165 recorded in 2010, to 3763 recorded in December 2014), increase of prison capacities (from 3771 to 3900 units) and improvement of the health care system.
In order to enhance rehabilitation policies Croatia has established a probation
service which has an important role in the execution of sanctions. The service is protecting the public and at the same time reducing the risk of recidivism through rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into society. Allow me to illustrate this with figures. In comparison to 2011, in 2014 we had an increase of almost 100% of judgments ordering community service instead of prison sentence (873 judgments in 2011, 1514 judgments in 2014). On the other hand, by executing alternative sanctions we have significantly reduced the number of short-term prison sentences.

On another topic closely related to the execution of sentences and human rights, allow me to take this opportunity to point out that Croatia welcomes the decision made by an increased number of States to apply a moratorium on the execution of the death penalty or to limit or reduce its application as such.

Mr Chairperson,
In every country the effectiveness of the criminal justice system is closely and naturally linked to the adherence of the society to the rule of law. In this respect, I would underline particularly an issue of great importance – namely the fight against corruption and organized crime.

Corruption is a global problem which threatens the stability and security of societies, democratic institutions and sustainable economic development of countries. Therefore, suppression of corruption is of utmost importance and should remain one of the top priorities on the agenda of the international community.

Throughout recent years Croatia has developed a systematic approach to bear down on corruption. Most of the efforts in raising standards in suppression of
corruption have been effectuated in the areas of: criminal law, resolution of conflict of interest, and public procurement.

Recently, having taken into consideration past experience and public perception of corruption, we have adopted a new Anti-Corruption Strategy.

In this new Strategy, notwithstanding the importance of suppression, we have put an emphasis on prevention of corruption, creating systematic solutions for removal of causes of corruption, instead of primarily dealing with the consequences through the repressive and judicial system. It should be mentioned that the Government was assisted in this process by a vibrant (strong, free and independent) civil society, highly aware of the significance of the fight against corruption.

Organised crime is another phenomenon which poses a serious threat to the national security of our countries, undermines the reputation of national institutions, distorts markets and ultimately affects our everyday life. Here, I would like to reiterate the importance of effective legal and institutional frameworks for tracing the proceeds of crime and their confiscation.

But what worries the most is that organised crime is constantly evolving. New technologies, open borders, facilitated travel and communications have enabled the establishment of more flexible forms of criminal organization. The fight against them is a challenge to which the criminal justice system needs to give an answer. It requires new approaches, effective strategies as well as constant and enhanced communication and cooperation between member states.

Therefore Croatia strongly supports initiatives that increase international cooperation in criminal matters. We agree that international cooperation has a
crucial role in prevention, prosecution and punishment of all forms of crime, including terrorism.

On this very real and pressing problem I would like to stress that Croatia condemns most strongly all acts of terrorism. Being aware of the seriousness of the threat posed by current terrorist organizations, Croatia attaches great importance to the universal adherence to all international Counter-Terrorism Conventions and Protocols, and their full implementation.

Special consideration is given to the very actual phenomenon of foreign fighters involved in terrorist activities. In accordance with the UN Resolution 2178 Croatia is in the process of amending its Criminal legislation in line with the operative part 6 of the Resolution.

We stand ready to intensify our efforts in the legal and related capacity building areas of countering terrorism, mindful of the fact that the fight against terrorism must comply with our obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law.

Mr Chairperson,

The need for partnership is a result of the era in which we live. We are facing new challenges, but as history has shown, we will have to deal with them and find ways to overcome them. In addition, there is a greater imperative to undertake these efforts collectively in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, dialogue and solidarity. It is the ultimate task and I believe that this Congress will contribute to this end.
Allow me to conclude by giving our full support to the implementation of the Doha Declaration and the role of the CCPCJ as a forum for continuing exchanges of good practices in efficient and fair criminal justice systems.

Thank you for your attention!