

Video message by Commissioner Ylva Johansson for the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: “Advancing crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: towards achieving the 2030 Agenda” to take place on 7-12 March in Kyoto

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the European Union and its Member States, I congratulate the Government of Japan and the secretariat for organising the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

I thank in particular His Excellency Ambassador Takeshi Hikihara. Together with his team, he guided us skilfully during the negotiations of the Kyoto Declaration in difficult COVID-19 conditions. We all share the conviction that sustainable development and the rule of law are interlinked. The EU and its Member States fully support the Declaration.

The EU and its Member States strongly believe in the value of cooperating in international bodies. We have a long-standing and effective partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The EU strongly believes that the international community should build on established standards and further develop multilateral solutions.

Corruption undermines the rule of law. Combatting corruption is high on the EU's agenda. Our new legislation protects the EU's financial interests against fraud and corruption. The independent European Public Prosecutor's Office tasked to fight crimes against EU budget is starting to work. We are committed to making it a key actor for international mutual legal assistance. The revised EU anti-money laundering rules further improve transparency of beneficial ownership.

The reviews of implementation of the United Nations Conventions against Corruption and against Transnational Organized Crime are important for guiding us on the need for further action. The EU intends to launch the preparations for the review process ahead of the UN General Assembly Special Session on corruption in June 2021.

The EU and its Member States strongly support evidence-based **crime prevention**. We are developing common guidelines for community policing, through the European Crime Prevention Network and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training.

We are making sure crime does not pay. The EU and its Member States have adopted new and more effective legislation on freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of crime.

To advance **criminal justice**, we need effective investigation and prosecution. The presumption of innocence, the right to a fair trial and the rights of defence should always be upheld.

The ruthless exploitation of the COVID-19 pandemic by criminals urgently calls for stronger **multilateral cooperation**. We call on all UN Member States to make the widest possible use of the relevant conventions. The pandemic also underlines the urgency to address issues such as crimes related to falsified medical products and crimes involving domestic violence or against children.

The EU-UN launched the Spotlight Initiative, the largest-ever global against gender based violence, with an unprecedented investment of 500 million euro.

The EU and its Member States consider the death penalty an inhumane, cruel and degrading punishment. We oppose the death penalty and promote its universal abolition. We call upon all UN Member States to abolish the death penalty in all circumstances.

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The **rule of law** is essential for the stability, security and development of our democracies. Protecting the rule of law protects the fundamental values of our societies.

The European Union has established a new rule of law mechanism, with the EU Rule of Law report published last year for the first time. Its goal is to foster a rule of law culture across the EU.

We must put an end to **terrorism**. The EU and its Member States have adopted a strong legal framework to combat terrorism, and recently agreed on legislation countering the spread of terrorist content online.

We must also fight crimes such as **trafficking in human beings, migrant smuggling and environmental crime**. The EU and its Member States have developed common definitions to help tackle the most serious forms of these crimes.

The EU and its Member States have also developed legislation criminalising **cyber**-attacks, fraud and dissemination of child sexual abuse material and grooming in line with the Council of Europe Budapest Convention. We are currently also discussing rules on cross-border access to digital evidence in the EU. The EU and its Member States will continue to engage in the multilateral exchanges on cybercrime to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We look forward to the discussions at the Congress. We congratulate you on the adoption of the Kyoto Declaration.