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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,
UNGA75, AGENDA ITEM 81

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

15 OCTOBER 2020

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Mr Chair

The United Kingdom welcomes the opportunity to speak in support of the International Law Commission's work on the draft Articles on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity, and the accompanying commentaries.

The United Kingdom is grateful for this important work, which has provided an opportunity for States to work together to tackle a lacuna in the fight against the most serious crimes. We believe that, in broad terms, the provisions of the draft Articles on the substantive definitions of the crimes are well-founded in State practice and opinion iuris, as demonstrated in relevant treaties (notably the Rome Statute of the ICC), in national legislation and in judicial decisions.

As we have said before, the United Kingdom also specifically commends the ILC for improvements made to the draft Articles, including making the wording of the draft Articles more inclusive by removing the definition of "gender".

The United Kingdom supports the Commission's recommendation for States to elaborate the draft articles into a convention in the UN General Assembly or at a diplomatic conference. We believe there is a sufficient consensus around the core provisions of the draft articles to suggest that a Convention on this subject could successfully be negotiated. We firmly believe that such a convention could be a powerful legal tool to promote the accountability of perpetrators of atrocity crimes. We were disappointed it was not possible to agree on how to take this forward at the Sixth Committee's last meeting. The United Kingdom would welcome the Committee agreeing a concrete timetable for the opening of negotiations on such a convention.