

Statement on behalf of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania

by

Dr. Mārtiņš Pāparinskis, Adviser, Council of Independent Experts on International and European Law to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia

at the Sixth Committee on Agenda item 85 "The Rule of Law at the national and international levels"

United Nations New York
8 October 2021

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the three Baltic states – Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania.

On 17 September, the Baltic states celebrated the 30th anniversary of joining the United Nations family. It was possible to join the Organization in 1991 because all three states, former members of the League of Nations, had regained their independence after 50 years of unlawful occupation and annexation by the Soviet Union. This painful memory of disrespect for the rule of law informs the profound commitment that the Baltic states have to a rules based international order and also their continuous support for its strengthening.

Madam Chair,

Promoting development and respect for international obligations has always been a central aspect of the United Nations activities. Efforts in this sphere include the progressive development of international law and its codification, the development of international treaties, and strengthening of peaceful means of international dispute settlement. These efforts contribute significantly to the maintenance of international peace and security as well as to promotion of human rights and sustainable development.

The Baltic states welcome the role of the United Nations in promoting the codification and progressive development of international law, notably through the International Law Commission. We are willing to take an active part in this process. For that reason, the Baltic states have for the first time jointly nominated a candidate to the International Law Commission in the elections to be held next month.

Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania promote compliance with international treaties. Earlier this year, we joined as the founding members to the Group of Friends of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Through this group we aim to support the Constitution of the Oceans, and address the challenges to seas and oceans, such as environmental pollution, climate change, sea-level rise, and implementation of sustainable development goals. We also actively participate in the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

International judicial institutions have a critical role in the establishment and upholding of international peace and security. The International Court of Justice plays the leading role in this area. Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania reaffirm their strong support to international courts

and tribunals in their work on peaceful settlement of disputes. We call on Member States, not having yet done so, to consider accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice as the Baltic states have done, most recently Latvia in 2019.

The international criminal justice system plays an important role in preventing impunity and upholding the rule of law. By bringing justice to victims of mass atrocity crimes, accountability mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, help establishing a lasting peace. The Baltic states are strong supporters of the International Criminal Court. The Court has a crucial role in ensuring accountability when violations are not addressed at the national level. The Baltic states encourage all Member States, not having yet done so, to ratify the Rome Statute.

Madam Chair,

We welcome the activities of the United Nations in the last 12 months, as accounted for in the report of the Secretary-General of 26 July 2021 “Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities”. The work of the United Nations is especially significant amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted in the report, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep inequalities in the distribution of wealth and resources, justice and security, and protection of human rights and delivery of basic services.

Our common objective is poverty eradication and sustainable development of all societies. The Baltic states believe that Building Back Better efforts are to be directed towards the enhancement of the rule of law. Development and the rule of law are closely interrelated. Solid legal frameworks strengthen entrepreneurship as well as public and private sector investment. Thus, strengthening the rule of law will foster an environment enabling the reduction of poverty and sustained growth.

I thank you.