

Nordic statement at UNGA Sixth Committee resumed session on crimes against humanity, 77th Session of the UN General Assembly, United Nations, 10-14 April 2023, Cluster 1

Mme/Mr Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden – and my own country, Denmark.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Bureau, the Secretariat, and all delegates for participating in this initial exchange of substantive views on all aspects of the draft articles on crimes against humanity by the International Law Commission.

The Nordic countries welcome the discussions of this resumed session dedicated to the abolishment of crimes against humanity. We are committed to ensuring that our deliberations will be inclusive and constructive, and we trust that all delegations will do the same. Let us seize this opportunity to move forward towards a highly needed convention.

Among the most serious international crimes, crimes against humanity lack a dedicated convention. Despite being clearly prohibited under international law; these crimes are the horrific reality around the world. We cannot ignore that civilians suffer while perpetrators enjoy impunity. We need to turn the tables.

The elaboration of a new convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity is a long-overdue step in the right direction. The Nordic countries consider that the draft articles serve as a solid basis for a future convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity.

A new convention would fill a gap in the international treaty framework. It would strengthen the international criminal justice system, and the ability of States, at the national level, to prevent and punish these horrendous crimes, which concern the international community as a whole. A convention would also promote much-needed inter-state cooperation and thereby ensure more effective and efficient investigations and punishment of perpetrators. We cannot delay this process any longer.

Mme/Mr Chair,

Now turning to the preamble and Article 1, which is the subject of this statement. We find that the preamble as a whole provides a balanced and well-written conceptual framework for the draft articles, which is the purpose of a preamble.

It sets out the historic and legal context of the draft articles. It highlights the connection to the maintenance of peace and security. It affirms that crimes against humanity must be prevented in conformity with international law and highlights that prevention is advanced by putting an end to impunity for the perpetrators of such crimes. And crucially, it recalls that the prohibition of crimes against humanity is a peremptory norm of international law.

This leads me to say a few words on Article 1 regarding the scope of the draft articles. Both the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity are vital. The twofold purpose of the draft articles is necessary in order to shape the instrument most needed to end these atrocities. As highlighted by the preamble, the obligations to prevent and punish go hand in hand.

Mme/Mr Chair,

In closing, I would like to reiterate the support of the Nordic countries for the elaboration of a convention on the basis of the draft articles, as recommended by the International Law Commission after 5 years of intense work. We note that many other states have expressed their substantial support for further consideration of the draft articles and the Commission's recommendation to elaborate a convention.

The Nordic countries stand ready to ensure progress towards a convention on crimes against humanity as part of our common efforts to prevent and strengthen accountability for international crimes. We look forward to engaging with all delegates on this important work.

I thank you, Mme/Mr Chair.