



**Statement by**  
**Mr. Bahram Heidari**  
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**before the Sixth Committee of**  
**the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**  
**On Agenda item 84:**  
**“The scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction”**  
**New York, 12 October 2023**

**Mr. Chairman,**

I would like to align myself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations, respectively and reiterate the following as my delegation’s long-standing position in my national capacity.

According to the widely accepted understanding regarding the principle of universal jurisdiction, the rationale underlying universal jurisdiction emanates from various conventions in the context of the quest for a viable and effective global criminal justice mechanism with the aim of combating those gross and heinous crimes that are considered as crimes committed against the interests of all. Therefore, regardless of the place in which



such crimes are committed, the accused are prosecuted within the country of arrest in order to avoid impunity as the main objective of the concept.

Although the existence of the principle of universal jurisdiction is undisputed, Member States have yet to reach a common understanding on the conceptual and legal framework of universal jurisdiction and its scope of application, in particular, the intersection between universal jurisdiction and the immunities of certain high-ranking officials. In addition, there exists no consensus among national legislations on the categories of crimes under universal jurisdiction. Nonetheless, the matter of concern lies within the non-consensual expansion of crimes under universal jurisdiction that would not be compatible with the objectives and purposes of this concept.

**Mr. Chair,**

Under the circumstances in which there is no international legal basis for the application of the universal jurisdiction, the broad interpretation and application of this principle in forum States shall not be taken as a valid precedent of universal jurisdiction.



In this regard, we would like to highlight the concerns of a number of the ICJ's judges regarding the judicial chaos that would likely arise, if universal jurisdiction should be conferred upon the courts of every State in the world to prosecute such crimes as raised in the "Arrest Warrant" case within the judgment of 11 April 2000 (Democratic Republic of Congo v. Belgium). Furthermore, as Judge Guillaume has also indicated in paragraph 10 of its Separate Opinion in this case, "Universal jurisdiction *in absentia* is unknown to international conventional law."

On top of that, whatever the source of universal jurisdiction, what remains to be of concern is its selective as well as arbitrary application for the benefit of certain specific States which can prejudice and undermine international legal order based on international law, particularly the cardinal principles of international law such as the equal sovereignty of States and the immunity of State officials from foreign criminal jurisdiction.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Islamic Republic of Iran views universal jurisdiction as a treaty-based exception in exercising its national criminal jurisdiction. It shall be complementary to other bases of criminal jurisdiction, such as territorial, protective and personal jurisdictions, and mainly provides a tool to prosecute the perpetrators of certain serious crimes under relevant international



treaties. Moreover, universal jurisdiction cannot be exercised in isolation or to the exclusion of other relevant rules and principles of international law mentioned earlier.

Given the divergence of views, incoherence and lack of unanimous state practices, including accordingly non-formation of the relevant customary rules of international law, we are of the view that referring this matter to the ILC for further examination would not produce satisfactory results as we move forward.

**I Thank you, Mr. Chair.**