



# CZECH REPUBLIC

## Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

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79<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly  
Sixth Committee

Crimes against humanity

**Statement by**

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New York, October 10, 2024

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Mr./Madam Chair,

I wish to align myself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union on behalf of the Union and its Member States.

At the outset, I would like to emphasize why the issue of crimes against humanity is so important. This discussion and the initiative to negotiate a convention on crimes against humanity is not just a legal formality. Crimes against humanity are, unfortunately, very real. Too real, in fact. They may even be being committed as we sit here. We are talking about murders, torture, rapes and other inhumane acts committed on a large scale. I do not want to believe that there is a single person in this Committee who is willing to turn a blind eye to this.

Mr./Madam Chair, it is not only a legal imperative to act decisively to prevent commission of crimes against humanity. It is also a moral imperative. And we have the power to help to prevent them. We proved it in the past by adopting the Genocide Convention, the Geneva Conventions and other instruments. Crimes against humanity are no less serious than genocide or war crimes. Outlawing them in a convention is the least we can do to help prevent them. In doing so, we will not only promote accountability and justice, but also reconciliation and we would help the victims to heal. What can we agree on in this Committee if not on a need to legally prohibit such atrocities in a convention?

Mr./Madam Chair, this issue is a matter of utmost urgency. Yet, we have been considering it since 2018. It is now 2024. In my last statement in my national capacity, in 2022, I said that we were not making any progress and I advocated the establishment of an appropriate forum to discuss the substance of the ILC draft. The part about not making any progress is no longer true and we are grateful for that. We have had two substantive resumed sessions where we have listened carefully to other delegations. And yes, there may still be differences over specific wording, over legal issues. But that is exactly why we are here as representatives of States. To iron out those differences and to negotiate an acceptable outcome. To do that, now in 2024, we need to convene a conference of plenipotentiaries.

Mr./Madam Chair, how to prevent and punish crimes against humanity is a legal question. But whether to do so is not a legal question, it is a question of humanity. And I hope that the answer to the latter question is clear. I cannot imagine that anyone here saying no to the question of whether we must prevent and punish crimes against humanity. That question being settled, we now advocate the convening a conference of plenipotentiaries: to discuss how. And I urge everyone here to support this course of action.

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair.