

**Statement on behalf of the Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania –
on the agenda item 85 “The scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction”
at the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly, Sixth Committee,**

delivered by Aleksas Dambrauskas, Deputy Permanent Representative of Lithuania

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Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania. The Baltic States align with the statement made by the European Union and its Member States.

Mr. Chair,

Perpetrators of international crimes cannot be allowed to escape accountability. As these crimes, by their very nature, are crimes against the international community as a whole, prosecuting those responsible is also a duty we owe to the international community as a whole. Therefore, we believe that universal jurisdiction is rooted in the peremptory norms of international law. And as such it should be used effectively to both combat impunity and prevent future international crimes.

Universal jurisdiction, as a subsidiary tool, can serve to fill gaps left by those unwilling to prosecute or to support those unable to do so. This is not solely about prosecuting perpetrators. Universal jurisdiction can offer multiple ways to contribute to international justice: it also involves securing evidence, exchanging information, and pooling expertise, as well as ensuring redress, to name a few. When properly implemented, it can also serve as a strong deterrent against the commission of international crimes.

All three Baltic States have adopted national legislation to this effect. Regardless of where international crimes are committed, by whom, or the nationality of the victims, perpetrators can be prosecuted in our territories. In fact, our countries have already applied universal jurisdiction in several instances, and we approach these discussions with the benefit of practical experience.

Mr. Chair,

Shortly after the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Baltic States, alongside Ukraine and other partners, established a Joint Investigation Team within Eurojust. This team facilitates investigations and prosecutions in the States concerned, assists in gathering and exchanging evidence on alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine. Later, the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine was established, creating a unique judicial hub to support national investigations into the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

Perpetrators of these crimes will ultimately face justice, whether under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, the Special International Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine or national jurisdiction of the States concerned. Regardless of the chosen path, the mechanisms already in place contribute significantly to the pursuit of international justice and serve as examples of universal jurisdiction being actively applied in practice.

Mr. Chair,

We encourage all States to adopt national legislation that enables the effective exercise of universal jurisdiction. Equally important is international cooperation. We acknowledge the various differences that remain, and the Secretary-General's report has provided a valuable overview of these issues. Nevertheless, our discussions should be guided by the shared goal of ending impunity for the most serious international crimes.

We believe that referring this topic to the International Law Commission would enhance our progress and advance the proper application of universal jurisdiction.

Thank you for your attention.
