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# UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,  
UNGA 77, AGENDA ITEM 78

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

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*Check against delivery*

Thank you, Mr President.

It is universally accepted that crimes against humanity are amongst the most serious crimes in international law. They involve such a degree of cruelty and violence towards the civilian population that they give rise to an imperative in the international community to seek their prevention and punishment. This has led to landmark international developments, such as the establishment of the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals, the creation by the Security Council of the Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the negotiation of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

For its part the ILC has a long record of achievement in support of these developments including in its work on the Nuremberg Principles and the Code of Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind. The ILC's most recent work on the issue – the draft Articles before us now - shifts the spotlight to the response of our national legal systems to these developments in international law, and seeks to ensure effective prevention and punishment of CAH at the national level and to promote international cooperation to that end. It is difficult to see why a convention based on these draft articles, which are focused on national, rather than international, prosecutions, should cause difficulties for any States, even those who so far have been reluctant to join the Rome Statute.

The UK believes that a new convention would have an important role to play in improving accountability for these atrocious crimes and reducing their occurrence in the future. It will also contribute to addressing conflict-related sexual violence which continues to shatter lives and scar communities around the world. The UK is committed to tackling conflict-related sexual violence in all its forms, including where it constitutes a crime against humanity. It is essential that the international community continues to work together to send the message that such crimes, and crimes against humanity as a whole, will not be tolerated.

This is now the fourth consecutive year in which the Sixth Committee is considering these draft Articles, but it has to be said that the Committee's record so far has been disappointing. This is particularly so when one considers (a) the gravity of the topic and (b) the high quality of the ILC's work.

The UK has therefore worked alongside partners from across all the regional groups in order to make meaningful progress on this topic this year. We are pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution which has recently been circulated proposing the establishment of an ad hoc committee as a dedicated forum to examine the draft Articles and to consider the recommendation of the ILC that States negotiate a new convention on the basis of the draft articles. We consider that this is essential in order to enable the in-depth and substantive exchanges of view that are both necessary and long overdue.

The draft resolution has been carefully calibrated in light of views we have heard in previous debates. It is entirely procedural in its nature and all States can support it without prejudice to their views on the merits of the draft Articles. We are seeking a deeper, more meaningful exchange, which is simply not feasible in the way the Committee has dealt with the topic to date. We therefore urge all States to engage with the draft resolution, and to support it, so that the Sixth Committee which is the world's most representative legal forum, can play its role in the prevention and punishment of atrocities and the further development of international criminal law.