

Statement by the State of Palestine

15 October 2020

Sixth Committee

Agenda Item 81 – Crimes Against Humanity

Mr. President,

International law should intervene preventively to dissuade perpetrators from committing their crimes, and when it is not possible, to provide justice to victims, and to hold perpetrators accountable so as to prevent recurrence of crimes.

Unfortunately, international law does not evolve constantly, adapting to new realities, and to the suffering endured by those who do not enjoy its protection. International law evolves by leaps that often come after horrors take place forcing us to finally do what should have been done beforehand.

The greatest leap international law witnessed was after the Second World War. But it took over 50 years after the Second World War to build the first international criminal court with a universal calling, a calling that still awaits to be truly fulfilled.

Crimes against humanity are taking place now in several places around the world. Should we wait for the next leap to address them, or just do our job? Allow the law to evolve not when it is no longer possible to wait, but whenever an opportunity presents itself.

We have such an opportunity. The International Law Commission has recommended the elaboration of a convention by the General Assembly or by an international conference, on the basis of the draft articles. We have an obligation to transform the work of the ILC into a legally binding instrument of universal character.

While the prohibition of crimes against humanity constitutes a peremptory norm of international law, consolidating the definition of these crimes and the relevant obligations of all States in this regard will strengthen and complement the existing legal framework and will further the fight against impunity for crimes of concern for the international community as a whole. This is at the core of the work and purpose of this Committee.

Thank you Mr. President.