



# CROATIA

Statement by

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at the

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*Agenda Item 86*

**The rule of law at the national and international levels**

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*Check against delivery*

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, my delegation wishes to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to contribute to this important topic with some additional remarks from our national perspective.

We thank the Secretary-General for his annual report on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities and express support for his continued efforts in strengthening and promoting the rule of law.

Mr. Chair,

The unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has brought immense suffering to a considerable number of people around the world. While protecting the well-being of citizens of our respective countries, respect for and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democratic standards, as well as the international law and the rule of law must not be neglected.

Adherence to the international law and faithful implementation of its rules, principles and standards, as well as respect for the rule of law, represent a firm foundation for lasting peace and stability worldwide. Negligence and rejection of the rule of law often lie at the root of conflicts. They weaken the state institutions and undermine their independence, impartiality and effectiveness.

Croatia remains fully devoted to the principles of international justice and resolution of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with international law. The principle of the rule of law at the international level requires the existence of effective adjudicative mechanisms. We highly value the contributions of international courts and tribunals in advancing the rule of law, in particular the vital role of the International Court of Justice. Croatia remains committed to supporting the International Criminal Court and all other International criminal courts in their efforts to combat impunity.

Mr. Chair,

The corruption is a rule of law problem in itself and the sub-topic of this year's debate in the Sixth Committee on "Measures to prevent and combat corruption" is timely and relevant. The COVID-19 pandemic poses very significant risks of corruption. Resources mobilized to respond to the health and economic crises create opportunities for corruption, while mechanisms for preventing and combating corruption may be suspended due to the lockdown.

My delegation is pleased to share its experiences and measures taken internally to support the prevention and fight against corruption, thus contributing to the debate on this topic. Croatia unfortunately is also not immune to the problem of corruption. For this reason, it has developed a legal and policy framework to promote integrity and prevent corruption in the public sector.

The Criminal Code criminalises different types of corruption and provides specific penalties, sanctions and measures such as confiscation or seizure. A specialised prosecutor's office charged with prosecuting corruption and organised crime - the Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime (USKOK), as well as a specialised police department within the Ministry of the Interior - the Police National Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime (PNUSKOK) are established.

The Anti-Corruption Strategy for the 2015-2020 period sets out priority areas and targets crucial objectives for further development and strengthening of the anti-corruption mechanism. The Strategy focuses primarily on prevention and is aimed at strengthening the transparency, accountability and integrity of officials and civil servants, strengthening the efficiency in the work of public authorities and eliminating the remaining shortcomings in the structure of the system and legislative framework. The overarching Strategy was accompanied by three more detailed two-year action plans. By establishing the Anti-Corruption Council in 2017, the mechanism for monitoring the implementation and assessing the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures has been further strengthened in order to ensure the effectiveness of overall national anti-corruption efforts. The work is ongoing on a new anti-corruption package, which includes the preparation of a new Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2021-2030.

The institutional framework for preventing and combating corruption has been established, and mechanisms for strengthening accountability and integrity of civil servants have been set up by the Code of Ethics for Civil Servants.

In February 2019, the Law on Protection of Reporters of Irregularities (so called Whistle-blower Protection Act) was adopted in order to ensure the availability and reliability of the reporting of illegal activities and irregularities, as well as effective protection of the whistle blower. The Act has had a positive and encouraging impact on the reporting of irregularities and is applied to all reporting of irregularities, regardless of whether it is in the public or private sector.

At international level, Croatia is a state party to all relevant international instruments and mechanisms with the aim of fighting and eliminating corruption and is committed to their decisive implementation.

Mr. Chair,

To strengthen the rule of law agenda, we need successful cooperation among States, in particular within the United Nations framework, and positive contribution from major UN bodies, notably from the General Assembly and the Security Council. Having said that, the upcoming Special Session of the General Assembly against corruption has the potential to pave the way for strengthened global anti-corruption efforts.

The rule of law is a key component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Croatia will continue giving the highest priority to challenges to the implementation of SDG 16.

Finally, Croatia remains deeply committed to further advance the rule of law at the national and international levels.

I thank you.