

Sixth Committee, 76th session: Crimes Against Humanity

Statement of New Zealand

Crimes against humanity – along with genocide and war crimes – represent the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole, and threaten peace, security and well-being, wherever they occur. New Zealand reaffirms its belief that crimes against humanity must be condemned, and that Member States must make every effort to prevent and punish their commission.

To date, no international convention has elaborated or codified such obligations for states.

The draft articles and commentaries prepared by the International Law Commission provide a strong basis for Member States to consider the negotiation of a Convention on Crimes Against Humanity.

New Zealand supports working towards negotiations for a convention, based on the draft articles. A convention is important in articulating clear, legally binding rules and consequences for the commission of crimes against humanity. It is a critical step for the international community to take action to prevent these serious atrocities and ensure accountability for the perpetrators of them.

We recognise that the effective prevention and prosecution of such crimes is enabled by taking measures at the national level, and by enhancing international cooperation, including with respect to extradition and mutual legal assistance. The articles adopted by the Commission also recognise this, and contain provisions dedicated to these topics.

New Zealand considers that the elaboration of a convention, based on the work of the International Law Commission on this topic, would complete the important exercise of codification of these crimes, strengthen the international criminal justice system and operate as an important tool against impunity.

Because such crimes are of concern to the entire international community, and in the interests of fostering widespread cooperation of states in this area, we believe the way forward must be the subject of a broad-based and inclusive dialogue.

New Zealand encourages all member states to approach the way forward constructively, and with an understanding that establishing a forum for exchanging views on the draft articles can only enrich our appreciation for each other's views on them. We have nothing to lose in doing so, and much to gain.

Thank you.