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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,
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CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

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Delivered by Jonathan Hollis

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Thank you Chair.

1. The United Kingdom aligns itself with the cross-regional statement made by the distinguished delegate from The Gambia and is pleased to see such a diverse group of States speaking with one voice.

2. For its part, the UK remains strongly supportive of the ILC's work on crimes against humanity and the progression of the draft Articles into a Convention.

3. Crimes against humanity are among the worst crimes we face. Over the years since Nuremberg, we have seen such crimes recognised in almost all regions of the world. Indeed, they are, tragically, all too familiar in the contemporary world. When the relevant criteria are satisfied, they include the most inhumane acts known to humankind, including sexual violence, apartheid and enslavement, among others.

4. However, there is not yet a general multilateral convention establishing a framework for the national prosecution of crimes against humanity. This represents an indefensible lacuna given the existing frameworks for other serious crimes such as genocide, war crimes and torture. Not only does the absence of such a framework undermine the prevention and prosecution of crimes against humanity, it also fails to give victims and survivors of such crimes the recognition they deserve. The real cost of crimes against humanity is the devastating impact upon victims, survivors, their families and communities. The UK is determined to prevent crimes against humanity, as putting an end to such crimes is the greatest legacy we can leave to those who have suffered from them.

5. As such, the UK continues to see benefits in developing an extradite-or-prosecute convention in respect of crimes against humanity. A convention has the clear potential to bolster the prevention and punishment of conflict related sexual violence and other crimes against humanity. It would also establish obligations for States to cooperate and provide a new legal basis for extradition and mutual legal assistance in this space. Effective extradition arrangements are more important than ever and in that context, where it can be, the UK's position is that justice is best pursued in the territory where the offence took place.

6. The UK has previously worked alongside partners from across all the regional groups in order to make meaningful progress on this topic. Therefore, we were delighted in April to see members of the Sixth Committee engage in a substantive and detailed legal dialogue on the draft articles which was both productive and insightful.

7. The UK is fully committed to the process agreed by the Sixth Committee and we will continue to engage constructively, and urge others to do the same, with the view to take a decision on this matter in the 79th session of the General Assembly.