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Meeting of the G7 Justice Ministers
Venice, 9-10 May 2024

Venice Declaration

1. We, the Ministers of Justice of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the Attorney General of the United States of America, and the Vice President of the European Commission have met in Venice on 9 and 10 May 2024 with the Minister of Justice of Ukraine, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Our Commitment to Ukraine

2. We recall the G7 Leaders' Statement issued on 24 February and we reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine and continue to condemn in the strongest terms Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine which constitutes a blatant violation of the UN Charter and other international law. We reiterate our commitment to apply sanctions and other restrictive measures against Russia through rigorous enforcement of our respective laws, including by holding accountable those who provide illicit financing and goods to Russia in violation of such measures. We also reaffirm that we will continue to explore all possible avenues to aid Ukraine in obtaining compensation from Russia, consistent with our respective legal systems and international law. We acknowledge the Foreign Ministers' statement issued on 19 April which confirmed that they will continue to work and advise ahead of the Apulia Summit on all possible avenues and feasible options by which immobilized Russian sovereign assets could be made use of to support Ukraine, consistent with our respective legal systems and international law. We remain also committed to support the investigations and prosecutions aimed at ensuring accountability for international crimes committed in and against Ukraine due to Russia's war of aggression, including by supporting the investigations and prosecutions by Ukraine, by supporting the International Criminal Court and other important existing accountability mechanisms focused on Ukraine and by conducting our own investigations and prosecutions, as appropriate. We also welcome ongoing discussions in the Core Group exploring the establishment of a tribunal for the prosecution of the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

3. As Justice Ministers it is our duty to promote and defend the rule of law and the institutions, domestic and international, which uphold it. The rule of law is fundamental to securing accountability for atrocities committed due to Russia's aggression but also in supporting Ukraine rebuild its institutions in a way which allows it to flourish both economically and socially over the long-term. Noting the many current legal and practical challenges resulting from Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, including with



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respect to holding elections in this context, we underline the vital importance of Ukraine’s continued implementation of reforms that underscore its commitment to democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including in the media sector.

4. During our latest meeting in Tokyo in July 2023, we made the decision to establish the Anti-Corruption Task Force for Ukraine (“ACT for Ukraine”). Today, we have acknowledged the progress made so far by the “ACT for Ukraine” under the coordination of Japan in assessing the anti-corruption needs of Ukraine and mapping the members’ ongoing and planned anti-corruption initiatives in the field of law and justice. We call on the “ACT for Ukraine” to continue its work to support Ukraine in the eradication of corruption in its justice system and complete the planned initiatives as quickly and effectively as possible, to bolster transparency and accountability for securing good governance for post-war phase.

5. We welcome Ukraine’s progress in its reform efforts, in the rule of law and the fight against corruption, which contribute to advance its process of accession to the EU. Strengthening Ukraine’s democratic institution, preventing misuse of reconstruction funds and ensuring the just and transparent access and allocation of foreign resources will facilitate the country’s recovery and reconstruction.

6. Today, together with our Ukrainian colleague and the support of the UNODC, we adopted the “*G7 Justice Ministers’ Pledge to Support Anti-Corruption efforts for the Reconstruction of Ukraine*” (the Pledge, Annex to this Declaration). We consider that the further development of anti-corruption measures in the key areas identified in the Pledge will position Ukraine to strengthen those institutions and agencies that are fundamental to upholding the rule of law and ensuring the delivery of justice.

7. We firmly believe that democratic countries must be able to rely on an empowered and independent anti-corruption workforce, free from undue influence, skilled in international judicial collaboration and capable of increasing public awareness about corruption’s severe and wide-ranging negative impact.

Deepening our cooperation on global justice challenges and Creation of the Venice Justice Group

8. Today’s meeting marks the third gathering of G7 Justice Ministers, following Berlin (2022) and Tokyo (2023). Drawing from the strength of our collaboration, today we established the Venice Justice Group to support the progress and coordination of G7 Justice Ministers’ initiatives and to plan the substantive agenda for successive Ministerials. Consequently, the ACT for Ukraine will fall under the auspices of the Venice Justice Group, as will future initiatives of G7 Justice Ministers. The Venice Justice Group will provide a *forum* to deepen our cooperation and learn from each other to improve our respective justice systems, based on the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights, and support collaborative efforts to promote and strengthen the rule of law and defence of democracy



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globally. The Venice Justice Group will be chaired by the Member State holding the G7 Presidency.

9. The Venice Justice Group will be flexible and dynamic, serving a coordinating function to address global challenges using our judicial and law enforcement expertise. Duplication with efforts of other established G7 bodies, especially with the Rome-Lyon Group, shall be avoided. We identified several of these global challenges as the following:

- i. Promotion of the rule of law, human rights and the defence of democracy, including working with partner countries, regional groupings and organizations to uphold common values;
- ii. Impact of deploying Artificial Intelligence within the Justice sector, recognising that the use of AI systems must not interfere with the decision-making power of judges or judicial independence;
- iii. Digitalization of justice to reduce burdens for businesses and individuals and increase access to justice;
- iv. The spread of illegal online content and all malign online disinformation;
- v. Co-ordination in the field of justice in the fight against transnational organized crime as well as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling, including environmental crimes.

10. In addition to the creation of the Venice Justice Group we agreed that, in line with our respective systems, we would consider as appropriate to support tackling these global challenges through the:

- a. Enhancement of international cooperation, such as mutual legal assistance and transfer of sentenced persons to their country of origin for completion of their sentences, to tackle the most serious forms of crime;
- b. Coordination of targeted technical assistance and capacity building programmes in the field of justice;
- c. Exchange of best practices and expertise, and mutual learning among G7 partners as we look to address these challenges within our domestic systems and contexts, and as we consider whether and how international legal frameworks are responsive to present day challenges.

Justice and legal dimension to countering transnational organized crime

11. Recognizing the far-reaching harm inflicted by transnational organized crime, we remain fully committed in the fight against the most serious and ever-evolving threats posed to our societies by its illicit activities. To effectively fight transnational organized crime, it is vital to increase prosecutorial, judicial and law enforcement authorities' capabilities to dismantle criminal networks, disrupt their business models and confiscate their profits.

Fight against drug trafficking and laundering of proceeds of crime

12. We have explored strategies to strengthen the efforts of our prosecutorial, judicial and law enforcement authorities in disrupting drug trafficking and laundering of proceeds of crime. We have noted that the ever-expanding international drug market continuously shifts towards new marketplaces and resorts to new payment methods; we also noted that the introduction of new psychoactive substances, including fentanyl, nitazines and other synthetic drugs, constitutes one of the most pressing challenges requiring closer international judicial cooperation. We recognize the importance of a modern, shared approach among the G7 Justice Ministers focusing on the most effective use of proven legal instruments and supported by the development of joint and collaborative actions to dismantle these criminal networks.

13. We have identified critical areas where the exchange of information on strategies for effective judicial response, where available, is paramount to address the global threat of production and distribution of illicit drugs. These areas include: (i) disrupting the international flow of precursor chemicals and pill pressing machinery, which are essential components for the synthesis of illicit drugs; (ii) enabling the swift tracking of illegal activities and the prosecution of offenders, including those who knowingly supply precursor chemicals to enable the production of illicit narcotics; (iii) increasing competent authorities' awareness regarding the misuse of advanced technologies, including digitalized markets, for drug trafficking and the criminal use of cryptocurrency; (iv) strengthening prosecutorial and judicial responses against criminal networks, including money-laundering networks that facilitate criminal activities; and (v) implementing innovative judicial tools, including in the area of freezing and confiscation of assets (i.e. non-conviction-based asset confiscation) to dismantle the financial structures of criminal organizations. We welcome the role of bodies such as Eurojust in facilitating international criminal justice cooperation and coordination. Recalling our Leaders' statement on Synthetic Drug Threats, we support the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats.

Fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling

14. Recognizing that the illicit activities of transnational organized crime have contributed to making human trafficking and migrant smuggling issues of global concern in recent years, including in the context of the fight against irregular migration, we underscore the need for a firm, comprehensive stance by the G7 Justice Ministries in coordination with our G7 Home Affairs colleagues. We, G7 Justice Ministers, acknowledge the changing nature and challenges posed by human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and the impact they are having on irregular migration, as well as the need to adapt to deliver effective and sustainable responses. Noting that transnational organized crime increasingly drives these criminal activities, we call upon all States Parties of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) to effectively implement their obligations under the Convention, including obligations for states who are party to the Protocols on human trafficking and migrant smuggling. We remain ready to support UNODC in its ongoing efforts to counter



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human trafficking and migrant smuggling, including as part of a more effective action against irregular migration, through encouraging greater prosecutorial and judicial cooperation. It is our goal to support competent authorities, including prosecutorial and judicial authorities, in the countries of origin, transit, or destination of irregular migration, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling by providing technical assistance and capacity building programs aimed at justice sector actors and experts, in addition to promoting the establishment of joint investigative bodies or conducting parallel investigations in accordance with existing multilateral international conventions. Finally, we further commit to ensuring that the UNTOC Implementation Review Mechanism achieves its goals set out in its procedures and rules, thus encouraging progress towards our common goal of dismantling criminal networks dedicated to human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Venice, May 10th, 2024