STATEMENT OF GEORGIA
ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (Item 108)
GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THIRD COMMITTEE
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Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and wish you every success in this important mission. Please, be assured of Georgia's full support during your chairmanship.

Today's important discussion reinforces the notion that strong judicial and legislative systems serve as building blocks of the rule of law and human rights protection. In this light, it is my privilege to have an opportunity to speak from this floor on recent developments and planned reforms of Georgia in Criminal Justice field.

Justice system reform continues to be the top priority for the Government of Georgia as part of the overarching goal to establish and enhance functional democracy that upholds principles of transparency, accountability and the rule of law in the country. The process is open, transparent and ensures citizens' engagement.

Georgia pursues successful inter-sector cooperation for public policy making and monitoring of policy implementation through its Interagency Councils designed for cross-sector coordination, involving the civil society representatives and international partners, good examples of this being the Criminal Justice Reform Council, Anti-Corruption Council, Anti-drug Council etc.

Criminal justice reform serves the establishment of effective criminal justice system based on respect and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. To this end, significant legislative amendments have been adopted by the Parliament of Georgia since 2012.

Reforms carried out in Prosecution Service are aimed at bringing its status in line with the best international standards. In 2013 Law of Georgia on Prosecution Service was amended in order to strengthen institutional independence of Prosecution Service and ensure that the prosecutors can carry out their professional functions impartially and objectively. As a result, all prosecutorial powers vested in the Minister of Justice have been transferred to the Chief Prosecutor.

Another set of legislative amendments envisage the gradual expansion of territorial and subject matter jurisdiction of jury trial. It is planned to continue the reform of the jury trial institution to make the process of jury selection and decision-making more transparent, which is indispensable for its compatibility with the case-law of European Court of Human Rights.

Important steps have been undertaken in strengthening of Principle of Equality of Arms of the defense and prosecution in the criminal procedure.
Liberalization of criminal policy is a new approach of the Government of Georgia, which denies the previous strict criminal justice policy and sentencing and chooses to replace it with more liberal approach. Georgia will continue its efforts to liberalize its criminal law policies and ensure the compliance of its penal legislation with international standards.

Reform of the plea bargaining institute is another major topic in the criminal justice reform agenda. With involvement of Criminal Law Experts and relevant bodies legislative amendments have been drafted aimed at bringing the institute in line with the best international practices.

Achieving compliance of victim’s rights with the international standards is also among the planned legislative reforms. The EU and CoE expertise will serve as the basis for changes to be introduced.

Juvenile Justice Reform is one of the key priorities for the Government of Georgia. Special Working Group on Juvenile Justice works to expand the legislative options of alternative sanctions for juveniles and bring criminal liability of juveniles in line with common European and international standards. In this process relevant Georgian state agencies cooperate with UNICEF which provided detailed analysis of the problematic issues of penal legislation of Georgia. Relevant state bodies endorsed the idea of adoption of separate code regulating all aspects of juvenile justice that has been advocated by national and foreign expert.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to join the international community in stressing the importance of strengthening international mechanisms for fighting corruption. In this light, I would like to underline achievements of Georgia in combating corruption over the last decade. In particular, as a result of fundamental anticorruption reforms, education, judicial and penitentiary systems, police and entire public sector was transformed and freed from corruption. While we emphasize the importance of achieving transparency of public institutions and their accountability to the public, we should realize that this is a continuous process and constant efforts are required in order to ensure sustainability of achievements.

Georgia fully shares the approach of the international community regarding the issue of illicit trade in conventional arms and considers that uncontrolled spread and excessive accumulation of conventional arms and ammunition pose serious threats to international peace and security. Therefore, creation of an effective legally-binding mechanism aimed at curbing illegal flow of arms, shall be viewed as a matter of priority in the international agenda. In this light, adoption of the landmark document - the Arms Trade Treaty- aimed at regulating international trade in conventional arms, is an important achievement. Georgia, with other UN member states supported the elaboration of this document from the very start of this process.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, I would like to reiterate that Georgia stays committed to further strengthening the rule of law and developing good governance practices as preventive mechanisms for combating crime at the national and international level.

I thank you.