*Check Against Delivery*

**STATEMENT**

**by**

**H.E. Ms Tanja Fajon,**

Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Foreign and European Affairs

Of the Republic of Slovenia

**on behalf of the Core Group of States**

**and**

**in national capacity**

at the Closing Ceremony

of the

MLA Diplomatic Conference;

Ljubljana, 26 May 2023

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to stand at this podium again and to celebrate with you the successful conclusion of the MLA Diplomatic Conference.

At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to Slovenia's partners in the Core Group of States – Argentina, Belgium, Mongolia, the Netherlands and Senegal – for their remarkable cooperation and friendship.

On this note, I am honoured to convey to you the closing remarks on behalf of the Core Group.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Core Group, I want to sincerely thank all the participants of the MLA Conference for your tireless work and valuable contributions.

It is only due to your unparalleled dedication that it was possible to ensure smooth and constructive negotiations and adoption process of such an important and complex international instrument.

Without your commitment, expertise and political will of your countries, the decade-long efforts of the Core Group to promote and raise awareness about the importance of the MLA Initiative would be in vain.

Let me reiterate - in the strongest terms possible - our sincere gratitude and content that our long-lasting commitment has finally yielded concrete positive results.

Dear Colleagues,

the adoption of the MLA Convention in such a short spell of time is a truly incredible – I am tempted to say historical – achievement.

It will significantly enhance the cooperation among all States Parties, and importantly contribute to the promotion of the Rule of Law and the fight against impunity at the global level.

The MLA Convention will allow the whole international community to stay true to its commitment to the principle of accountability by closing the existing impunity gap.

Moreover, it will enable States to step up their efforts in exercising their responsibility to hold the perpetrators of the most serious international crimes to account.

There is a growing and vital importance of enhanced cooperation among states and the necessary support for existing global accountability mechanisms. Fight against impunity is our common fight in which we must stand together and put the principle of complementarity into practice.

By successfully negotiating the MLA Convention, we have significantly contributed to the process of global harmonisation by building bridges between different legal systems and concepts, finally establishing a legal framework with common standards.

This will facilitate mutual legal assistance in criminal investigations, asset recovery, extradition, and other international legal matters.

The MLA Convention is a truly great example of global modernisation efforts, by incorporating provisions that will allow us to address the various contemporary challenges in cross-border law enforcement.

The purpose at the heart of the MLA Convention is to provide a legal basis for judicial cooperation, to simplify and expedite the process of obtaining and providing legal assistance. It will reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and ensure timely cooperation.

The Convention will substantially enhance State-to-State cooperation in investigating and prosecuting the most serious international crimes. It will strengthen our capacities in fighting impunity for such crimes.

With this Convention, we are transforming our words "Never again" into concrete action, with the national authorities much better equipped to deny perpetrators of atrocity crimes safe heaven.

Esteemed delegates,

We must never forget that we are doing it for every single victim that has ever been subject to the most unimaginable horrors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I know that this has been a long day and long two weeks, so please allow me to make just a few brief remarks also in my national capacity.

As we draw the curtains on this Conference, we stand united in celebration and optimism for the future of international criminal law. The adoption of the MLA Convention is a remarkable achievement that will resonate far beyond this conference hall.

It represents a giant leap forward in our collective fight against impunity and the pursuit of justice for the most serious international crimes. It stands as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path towards a world where accountability knows no borders.

As I said 11 days ago, this is the first Diplomatic Conference that Slovenia has been hosting. And it really means so much to us – and to me personally – that its success is resonating with Slovenia's longstanding and firm commitment to the international law, justice and accountability.

Slovenia was delighted and honoured to host this conference. I hope that we have made you feel welcome and that you are aware of our utmost respect and gratitude for your work at the Conference.

I would like to thank – first and foremost – to all the participating delegates and to all the teams in the capitals.

My highest appreciation goes to all the Conference officials and especially to the Judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi as the Chair of the Conference. Her extensive experience and expertise and her personal engagement were an important building block for the success of the conference.

The scope and the dynamics of this conference were overwhelming. So before concluding, I want to commend every single member of the organization team that made this conference possible.

And of course "hat off" to the often hidden but always indispensable team of interpreters and translators. You make the term "international understanding" a reality.

Dear friends,

today, we reaffirm our true commitment to the values of human rights, rule of law, and the dignity of every individual.

Together, we will continue to aspire to a future where impunity finds no shelter and justice prevails. Thank you all for your dedication and invaluable contribution to this historic endeavour.

I wish you good luck, safe travels home and I hope that Slovenia will always stay in your fond memory.

Hvala in nasvidenje!