SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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Vienna, 4 June 2026

35th Session of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ): Item 8

World Crime Trends and Emerging Issues: Violence Against Women and Girls

Mr. Chair,

Excellencies,

I appreciate the opportunity to address the 35th session of this Commission, under item 8.

In my work I focus heavily on tracking crime trends affecting women and girls worldwide; tracking emerging manifestations of violence against them; as well as identifying effective responses for these challenges.

In this respect, allow me to share some key findings and recommendations across six areas:

1. On online and technology-facilitated violence

Digital platforms remain crime scenes for serious offences that go beyond sexual exploitation and abuse.

I therefore reiterate my call on States to adopt binding measures on platforms distributing pornography such as:

1. Mandatory third-party age and consent verification for all individuals depicted in pornography whether they are adults or children;
2. Rigorous monitoring and moderation; and
3. imposing a binding duty to remove violent, abusive, and non-consensual content.

Critically, the monetization of this exploitation by online platforms, financial payment networks, and search engines must also be addressed.

2. On the abuse and exploitation of women and girls by criminal enterprises

The release of the Epstein files has exposed the industrial scale, reach, and methods of transnational criminal enterprises that target women and children.

These heinous crimes committed by the Epstein criminal enterprise – and which have shocked us all - go beyond trafficking and sexual exploitation.

In my view and that of other mandate holders, many of the crimes committed rise to the level of crimes against humanity.

Unfortunately, the response of States and law enforcement has been and continues to be grossly inadequate.

It is however not too late to remedy these failures.

The understanding gained from the Epstein files disclosure must urgently inform and result in swift effective investigations, accountability, and justice for crimes committed by this and other similar criminal networks.

3. On surrogacy

I am aware it was not referenced in the UNODC report on emerging issues; hence why I reference it.

Today, the global surrogacy market, valued at nearly $15 billion, and is expected to reach is projected to reach $99.75 billion by 2033.

It has a strong transnational dimension.

As documented in my 2025 report to the UN General Assembly, surrogate mothers frequently face violence, exploitation, trafficking, and slavery-like conditions.

Children born through surrogacy are subjected to sale and trafficking.

For the future, I urge this Commission and UNODC to give serious consideration to the crimes committed within the system of surrogacy and the harmful consequences for women and children.

4. On Femicide and reproductive violence

I welcome the growing recognition by States of the epidemic scale of femicide.

I encourage further attention to its invisible forms such as: Consequential suicide of women driven by the unbearable level of domestic violence; femicide in contexts of mass forced disappearance; as well as the use of femicide as part of efforts to destroy groups of women and girls in whole or in part.

Reproductive violence is also increasingly being committed against women and girls in times of crisis and war; as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

I have recommended to UN Preparatory Committee Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes against Humanity the inclusion of femicide, reproductive violence, the sale of children, pre-natal sex selection that particularly affects females, as specific crimes within the scope of the Convention.

5. On access to justice, sentencing

I am alarmed by the lax judicial responses to violent crimes against women, including for rape and offenses relating to child sexual abuse.

Extraordinarily light sentences gaslight victims, embolden perpetrators, and entrench impunity.

6. On data, services, and accountability

Recording the sex of both perpetrators and victims remains essential to identifying and responding to male violence against women and girls. National mechanisms dedicated to this work must remain a priority, properly resourced, and not dissolved into sex and gender-blind generic structures.

I conclude by reassuring you Mr. Chair and excellencies my availability to support you in addressing these issues.

Thank you.