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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Conclusions of the 39th meeting of the Network for investigation and prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (Genocide Prosecution Network) (Eurojust, The Hague, 22-23 April 2026)

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Delegations will find attached the above-mentioned conclusions.

## **Conclusions of the 39th Meeting of the Network for Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes**

*The Hague  
22–23 April 2026*

1. The Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Network of Contact Points for the investigation and prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes ('Network') recognised the unique platform provided by the Network for practitioners to exchange information, facilitate cooperation and enhance national investigations and prosecutions for the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (core international crimes).
2. The Network members expressed their gratitude towards the Cyprus Presidency of the Council and the Network Secretariat for organising the meeting, which allowed for practical cooperation and operational exchanges. The Network was once again appreciative of the participants' commitment, with 150 contact points attending the meeting in person at the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) in The Hague, the Netherlands.
3. The Network members welcomed a delegation of the East and Southern African practitioners from Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa and Uganda, and were thankful to the National Authorities Against Impunity (IMPNA) project and the Wayamo Foundation for organising and supporting this visit. The Network valued the information from their national practices in investigating and prosecuting international crimes, including Kenya's post-election crimes against humanity case, Uganda's prosecution of a former Lord's Resistance Army commander, South Africa's first apartheid-related crimes against humanity case and Mauritius's asset-tracing expertise. The delegation expressed interest in exploring further avenues for judicial cooperation and peer-to-peer exchanges of expertise with European counterparts.

4. The open session of the meeting focused on unlawful attacks against journalists in the context of armed conflict. In view of the sharp increase in such attacks in recent years, and the resulting rise in investigations and prosecutions, practitioners addressed legal protection according to international humanitarian law (IHL), reasons for increased and deliberate targeting in various armed conflicts, the prosecution of such attacks as core international crimes and the evidentiary value of journalists' work.

5. The Network members appreciated the opening presentation by the International Committee of the Red Cross on the protection of journalists under IHL. The discussion clarified the distinction between military press, war correspondents or embedded journalists, and journalists. While military press is considered part of armed forces, war correspondents and other journalists are civilians protected from direct attack unless they directly participate in hostilities, which must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The presentation also addressed detention regimes, including prisoner-of-war status for military press and war correspondents, protections afforded to civilian journalists and issues relating to accusations of espionage. It also emphasised that wearing a 'PRESS' sign does not confer any protection as it is not an IHL emblem, but it underlines the civilian status of a person.

6. Similarly, the Network members were grateful for insights shared by Reporters without Borders, emphasising that the rise in attacks against journalists demands a stronger response in investigations and prosecutions of these crimes. Effective prosecutorial strategies are critical, not only to deliver justice in individual cases but also to deter future violence against media workers. Positive examples, such as Ukraine's increasing number of investigations into crimes against journalists, demonstrate that willingness and robust action from national authorities can make a meaningful difference.

7. The Network greatly valued the insightful remarks from journalists, who shared personal and colleagues' experiences of reporting in conflict zones and the associated risks. Journalists explained the changed environment: in the past they faced general dangers of war, while now they are deliberately targeted – not only on the front lines but also in areas presumed safe. In this context, some media outlets have developed protocols and support measures, including cybersecurity tools, detection systems and peer-support groups, to protect journalists operating in conflict areas. Journalists emphasised the urgent need for stronger protection mechanisms, along with more investigations and prosecutions into these crimes.

8. The Network members welcomed updates from various national authorities on their investigations and prosecutions into crimes committed against journalists. The French authorities noted that while it is often possible to establish a clear picture of the crime scene, the proximity of journalists to attacks makes it particularly difficult to assess intent, proportionality, precautionary measures and, ultimately, military judgment. The challenge on establishing intent was also echoed by the Dutch authorities, who described the issue as being the red line and focus of their investigation into the killing of four Dutch journalists during El Salvador's civil war in 1982. Further, the Ukrainian authorities presented their cases and stressed that these attacks are not isolated but have a systematic pattern.

9. The Network members also greatly valued the presentation of the Swedish authorities on the evidentiary value of journalistic work. Such information can serve as direct, contextual and *mens rea* evidence. In particular, media reporting has been used to challenge defendants' claims of lack of knowledge and journalists have also testified in several cases, providing direct evidence. Challenges include source protection, access to original materials and defence challenges to the independence and objectivity of journalistic work.

10. The Network members shared their appreciation for the work of the Secretariat in support of the Network and followed with interest the updates shared on its completed and planned activities. They also took note of activities developed by the IMPNA project in its second year of implementation.

11. The Network members valued updates from civil society organisations (CSOs). They welcomed TRIAL International's findings of its latest study on CSOs' engagement with investigating and prosecuting domestic authorities in universal jurisdiction cases and the latest edition of the *Universal Jurisdiction Annual Review*. Further, CSOs praised the rise in cases during the last year but also noted the uneven attention to conflicts such as in Belarus, Palestine and Sudan. They also called for greater accountability for corporate actors, increased support for victims and witnesses and deeper coordination and cooperation between states and CSOs.

12. The Network members discussed the management of the Network during the restricted session, specifically the membership of the Steering Board, according to paragraph 5.2 of the Guidelines on the Functioning of the Network. The Network members renewed the membership of Mr Gérard Dive (Belgium), Ms Duscha Gmel (Germany) and Ms Mirjam Blom (The Netherlands), and confirmed the nomination of Ms Julie Petre (France) and Reena Devgun (Sweden). The Steering Board members have been appointed for a new term of two years, until 22 April 2028.

13. Lastly, the Network members and Observer States were grateful for the organisation of the closed session, which provided a confidential environment for valuable exchanges of best practices and information on ongoing proceedings.

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