



# UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## **Rethinking Responses to Crime: Justice, Security and Citizen Engagement to Promote Sustainable Peace and Development**

**Concept note for a High-Level Event at the 14<sup>th</sup> Crime Congress in Kyoto**

**Monday 20 April 2020, 4.30 – 6.00 pm**

### **Aim and Objectives**

This high-level event aims to advance our understanding of effective responses to crime in the 21st Century, exchanging perspectives from different settings to identify existing and emerging trends shaping the future focus of criminal justice. This exchange among leading practitioners and thinkers will distil key ingredients for policy makers and criminal justice practitioners to define the strategies for crime prevention and response that transcends the status quo and build a culture of respect for, and protection by, the rule of law.

### **Background**

News reports from around the globe are filled each day with stories of how crime negatively affect citizens across different countries and contexts. Crime is rapidly diversifying, and many novel methods of criminality impact the world with unprecedented reach and speed. Fast-paced advances in connectivity and globalization allow different types of criminal behaviour affect occurrences on the other side of the planet. Organized criminal groups as well as citizens living at the edge of legality are quick to respond to changing capacities of technology and connectivity and this requires updated and adapted institutional responses from the public sector. Many practitioners also argue that there is a need to rethink the methods for preventing and dealing with crime from a more socio-economic and human-centred approach, reflecting the growth and changing nature of “crime” as well as the power relations between the state and its citizens.

From the megacities in the global South to the inner-cities in the global North, from bustling suburban areas to quiet country side towns, the government’s primary responsibility to protect their citizens from crime and violence is a fundamental requirement to the notion of a rule of law-based society. The need to meet this condition is more pressing now than ever before to advance the vision set out by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, peace, justice and inclusion are the three main dimensions comprising the twelve targets of SDG 16 which is one of the most critical to the transformative 2030 Agenda. Its focus is on seven tenets of strong institutions (effective, inclusive, responsive, participative, representative, accountable and transparent), as well as peaceful societies, which are essential for achieving all SDGs. Without sustained peace, which goes beyond the mere absence of violence and includes respect for human rights and the rule of law, development gains are reversed. Crime is a serious impediment to this goal.

As a result, there is a need to enhance reflection on how criminal justice and security sector institutions (and their reform) can contribute to prevent and reduce crime more holistically. When legitimate State institutions deliver security to all people, regardless of race, religion or gender and include a strong prevention and



restorative justice approach, including through collaboration with grass-roots level organizations, the chance for citizen trust in the prospect of sustainable peace and development is increased. When security institutions are inclusive and take into account the needs of each category of the population, including the most vulnerable, in planning their operations, tensions and intercommunity conflicts can be prevented. For instance, when the police works together with the population for the prevention of crime or resolution of conflicts (community-oriented policing), citizens will have less need to resort to force and should conflicts arise, the population will have higher levels of trust that the security forces will bring the cases to justice. It is equally important to better understand the unintended yet potential role that existing approaches of the criminal justice and the security sector may be playing in reinforcing tensions across the very population it is meant to protect, and how these can be changed.

Solving the challenges of crime in the 21st Century requires a holistic and people-centred response, going beyond the traditional command-and-control approach to one that is much more participatory and inclusive, harnessing the potential of collaboration with communities, involving citizens more directly, and promoting engagement with youth and business sector. The exchange of ideas and commitment to action on crime response and criminal justice challenges in many different contexts is urgently needed, and most opportune to be raised with thought leaders participating at the Crime Congress.

In addition, this discussion can also benefit from recent developments in the context of the framework of the Secretary-General's strategic vision on prevention, as well as the advancement of the UN Peace and Security pillar work, pointing to the need to look for early warning and to devise measures aimed at sustaining peace through multi-disciplinary approaches (and multi-stakeholders) addressing conflict drivers or multipliers and peace spoilers. These approaches in the wider UN orientation should be adopted into the discourse and action in the area of crime prevention and criminal justice, if response to crime is to be effective and well-embraced by the citizens they serve. Acknowledging the fact that "the culture of lawfulness" -one of the key themes of the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice- is an essential ingredient of a society that is based on the rule of law that will leave no one behind, this high-level event will bring together perspectives of various actors that have a role to play in creating resilient communities that can respond effectively to crime in a globalized yet localized world.

## Outline

- Opening address by a senior UN official
- Keynote address by a senior speaker
- Short video: challenging responses to crime in action (showcasing field project that's making a difference on response/prevention of crime)
- Davos-style high-level thematic panel discussion with (diverse mix of 4-5 prominent panellists e.g. Minister from Member States, academic, civil society, business, etc)
- Closing remarks & summary

(Note: Above is an indicative agenda outline and the precise format and specifics of the event will be adapted to confirmed speakers/panellists.)