

14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Kyoto, Japan | 7 - 12 March 2021

HIGH-LEVEL EVENT: Rethinking Responses to Crime in the globalized and yet localized world (8 March 2021 9.30 – 10.30)

Concept Note prepared by the Office of the Director, Division for Operations, UNODC

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 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 new methods of criminality impact the world with unprecedented speed. In our world experiencing fast-paced advances in connectivity and globalization, 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 public sector's institutional responses to update and adapt. Many practitioners also feel that there is a need to think of more socio-economic and human-centred approach to looking at how crime can be prevented and dealt with, reflecting the growth and changing nature of "crime" as well as power relations between the state and its citizens.

From the megacities in the global South to a quiet countryside town (or equally, in inner-cities) in the global North, government's primary responsibility to protect their citizens from effects of crime and violence is a fundamental requirement to the notion of a rule of law-based society. The SDGs vision requires this condition to be met better than ever before. 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. 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, also through collaboration of grass-roots level organizations, this increases the chance for citizen trust in the prospect for sustainable peace and development. 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, it can prevent tensions, such as intercommunity conflicts. For instance, when the police work together with the population for the prevention of crime or resolution of conflicts (community-oriented policing), they will have less need to resort to force and should conflicts arise, the population will trust the security forces in bringing justice. It is also important to better

understanding the potential inadvertent role that the criminal justice and security sector may be playing to reinforce 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 collaborating with communities, involving citizens more directly, promoting engagement with youth and business sector in particular. Thought leadership through exchange of ideas and commitment to action on such topics are relevant in discussing crime response and criminal justice challenges in many different contexts, and most opportune to be raised at the Crime Congress.

In addition, this discussion also fits into the 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 latest thinking and approaches in the wider UN orientation should be adopted into our 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 the globalized and 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 UNODC 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/AG 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.)