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Education and Youth Engagement as Key to Making Societies Resilient to Crime

Concept Note for Workshop 3 at the 14th Crime Congress in Kyoto

Committee I, 3 Meetings:

Thursday, 23 April 2020 Morning session, Afternoon session

Friday, 24 April 2020 Morning session

The 2030 Agenda presents an indivisible and integrated approach to sustainable development and its goals are complementary and interlinked. However, the road to fully implement the targets and achieve Goal 16 is still long. In advance to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held in New York, from 9 to 18 July 2019, the Secretary-General issued a report on the status of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. According to this report, actions towards the achievement of Goal 16 “are uneven and continue to deprive millions of their security, rights and opportunities and undermine the delivery of public services and broader economic development.”

Within this context, involving a wide variety of stakeholders, including youth, is more time-sensitive than ever. This was a strong message that emerged during the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, held in New York, on 8 and 9 April 2019. Youth represent, roughly, 1.8 billion people – or 30% of the world’s population. Member States increasingly recognize the importance of involving youth – after all, addressing some of the major challenges in today’s world inherently requires consideration for such a significant part of the population. This is as true for issues such as the climate crises, as it is for crime prevention and criminal justice. Since 2015, a series of landmark documents further reinforced the existing commitments that had been thereto agreed upon by United Nations Member States. Examples include the Doha Declaration and Security Council resolution 2250, which include specific reference to the importance of youth engagement to promote the rule of law.

It is broadly recognized that education has a major role to play in shaping the values of future generations, building collective consciousness and reshaping societal preferences. In addition, education helps develop the necessary skills to enact those values. Education can play a key role in fostering a culture of lawfulness and engaging society at large in promoting the rule of law. Therefore, within the framework of the Fourteenth Congress’ overarching theme, education is a key enabler of youth becoming positive agents of change and promoters of the rule of law – especially Goal 16 and other related Goals.

However, notwithstanding the provisions contained in the Doha Declaration, the incorporation of rule of law issues into teaching curricula and extracurricular initiatives has not yet advanced sufficiently at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, despite Member States attributing importance to the matter. The 2030 Agenda and the Doha Declaration recognize that crime prevention, criminal justice and other rule of law aspects are not the sole responsibility of Governments and law enforcement and, in this regard, the education sector – the formal and non-formal sectors and also informal learning – can play a key role in developing a whole-of-society approach to fostering a culture of lawfulness.



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This workshop aims to assess the extent to which there are challenges and opportunities to advance education on the rule of law. The workshop will, firstly, focus on the issue of youth engagement and young people as drivers of change, particularly to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the goals related to crime prevention, criminal justice and other rule of law aspects. Secondly, the workshop will address how education can be a driver of youth engagement as well as bring societies closer to the crime prevention and criminal justice sectors in promoting the rule of law. The workshop will draw on experiences from the primary, secondary, tertiary sectors as well as informal learning where, for example, sports and the development of life skills for youth at risk have been identified as good practices.

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, an institute of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network, has assisted in the preparation and organization of the workshop.