WORKSHOP C:
PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO PREVENTING URBAN CRIME

Crime and violence are constantly evolving phenomena which are closely linked to the patterns of growth of countries and cities. Large cities in developing countries, and particularly their poorest and most disadvantaged inhabitants, are those most frequently afflicted by urban crime and violence. This workshop examines some of the key trends in urban growth and crime in cities, and presents recent innovative and effective crime prevention practices and tools, as well as showing why it is essential to intensify investment in crime prevention in urban areas.

Awareness of the need for crime prevention as an integral part of sub-regional, national and local government responsibilities has increased remarkably over the past two decades. However, the speed of urbanization, the inability of cities to provide sufficient infrastructure, and the widening disparities in income and access to services among their populations create conditions that continue to foster crime. Income inequality, youth unemployment and significant slum populations are just some of the reasons that contribute to the increase in urban crime, whether it is violence associated with drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, youth gangs or more generally in public spaces. It affects safety in homes, schools, commercial establishments, public transport and sports and other public venues. The problem of the exclusion of segments of the urban population – including slum dwellers, minority and migrant groups and women - from decision-making and from meaningful consultation, and some of the urban unrest this can generate, should not be underestimated.

Increasing the exchange of information, experience and technical assistance at international, regional and local levels, can help in the development of strategies to prevent crime in mega-cities, and in cities with very high crime rates. In recognition of the Millennium Development Goals, Member States may wish to consider the adoption and implementation of the Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime and other international standards and norms concerning the rights of disadvantaged and minority groups. Mega-cities themselves should be encouraged to develop their metropolitan and regional structures to enable them to work in an integrated way to tackle infrastructure, housing, transport and other social and economic problems that can facilitate crime and violence. Countries may wish to consider giving greater attention to the redevelopment of public space with a view to creating safe and accessible places for interaction and recreation, while all levels of government may be encouraged to develop and implement inclusive, gender-sensitive and effective crime prevention strategies.