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**Commission on Crime Prevention
and Criminal Justice**

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Items 6(d) and 7 of the provisional agenda*

Integration and coordination of efforts by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and by Member States in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice: other crime prevention and criminal justice matters

Use and application of United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice

**Summary of the General Assembly High-level debate on
“Enhancing youth mainstreaming in crime prevention
policies”****

Note by the Secretariat

On 6 June 2022, the General Assembly held a High-level Debate on “Enhancing youth mainstreaming in crime prevention policies” in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) at the United Nations Headquarters. The attached summary by the President of the General Assembly was prepared pursuant to paragraph 22 of General Assembly resolution 76/187 for transmission to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and to all Member States.

* [E/CN.15/2023/1](#).

** This document has not been edited.



Summary

General Assembly: High-level Debate on *“Enhancing youth mainstreaming in crime prevention policies”*

New York, 6 June 2022

President's Summary

Introduction

The President of the General Assembly (PGA) convened on 6 June 2022 a High-level Debate on *“Enhancing youth mainstreaming in crime prevention policies”*, in cooperation with United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, pursuant to operative paragraph 22 of General Assembly resolution 76/187. The President was also invited to prepare a summary of the discussion for transmission to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and to all Member States.

The one-day High-level Debate consisted of an opening segment, a high-level segment with general statements, an interactive panel discussion and a closing segment. The panel addressed the issue *“Mainstreaming youth in crime and violence prevention policy development and evaluation”* and included a question-and-answer session.

The opening segment featured statements from H.E. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th session of the General Assembly, H.E Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of UNODC and Mr. Junbert Pabon, Youth Representative for Peace, World Organization of the Scout Movement.

High-level segment

The participants emphasized the importance of the High-level Debate as a timely event to share national practices and lessons learned on the development and implementation of effective and innovative crime prevention policies for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Several speakers referred to the Kyoto Declaration, adopted at the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, as an important document to guide Member States on the design and implementation of inclusive policies surrounding youth and crime, including crime prevention. **The power of youth as agents of change** was noted by a large number of speakers, bearing in mind the power that young people have to act as a positive and creative force in their communities.

The innovative practices in strengthening youth resilience were also a core emphasis of interventions. Speakers elaborated on the need for **multi-sectoral approaches to crime prevention** and highlighted the importance of early crime prevention interventions, peer-to-peer exchanges, building strong families and providing adequate education for all. Within the context of education and skills training, emphasis was placed on ethics and citizenship education as a fundamental step to support crime prevention efforts from an early age in children. It was stressed by several speakers that crime prevention requires action at the community level, including cooperation with civil society, community-oriented policing, or the development of local youth initiatives around inter alia skills training, health promotion, safe spaces, sport and arts.

Member States also indicated the importance of applying a **gender-sensitive approach to prevention**, recognizing that young men and women may be impacted differently by crime, violence and victimization. This is particularly important when providing psychosocial services and considering access to social services for the most vulnerable groups. **Ensuring that no one is left behind and putting those most vulnerable first was also reiterated by many Member States**, in line with the 2030 Agenda. Several Member States indicated support for the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda", with a few governments offering support for the start of a UN Youth Office to further support young people and expand the work of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

Further emphasis was placed on ensuring that there are **adequate tools and mechanisms to meaningfully engage and involve young people in decision-making processes**, including youth advisory boards for local crime prevention policies. Sufficient mechanisms also need to be supported by appropriate funding and financing opportunities for youth-led initiatives and projects to counter violence and crime at a local, regional and national level.

Interactive Panel Discussion

During the interactive panel discussion, "*Mainstreaming youth in crime and violence prevention policy development and evaluation*", several points were made about **the need to better integrate and meaningfully include young people into the crime prevention debate**. Often, young people are viewed as potential perpetrators, but this perspective needs to change if Member States are to empower young people in their communities.

The first speaker, the Austrian State Secretary on Youth, emphasized **the importance of providing social services** as well as counselling and mental health services for young people as a best practice in crime prevention. She also put forward the idea of a **social safety net as a support mechanism for youth-led and youth-focused organizations**. Another best practice was the involvement of a "Youth Check" where there is a standard protocol to have policies reviewed by young people when these policies directly impact them. In a sense, this guarantees meaningful involvement of young people in all processes.

The second speaker, a Professor from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, **indicated how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is linked to different areas of crime prevention**, with decreased poverty, zero hunger, good health, quality education, gender equality, decent work, reduced inequalities, and peace and justice, in particular, being integral drivers of reduced criminal activity. Reflecting on the need for effective crime prevention, the speaker indicated that it is essential, especially in low- and middle-income countries where there are no resources to waste, to insist on evidence-based interventions to prevent crime. This usually means **conducting randomized controlled trials (RCTs)** to measure impact and change. Constructing this evidence base can be done alongside plans for scaling up interventions to meet the need, and this approach resolves the ethical dilemma inherent in the contradictions between the typically slow process of building evidence and the need to act immediately to reduce crime.

The third speaker, a youth representative from the Philippines, who also provided a statement during the opening segment of the debate, shared best practices from his experience organizing Scout Troops in youth detention facilities, finding **that this type of structured, values-based organization helped build confidence in detained young people and taught them social and**

vocational skills which helped prevent recidivism. He also emphasized the need for capacity-building initiatives for young people and criminal justice officers who are working with young people deprived of their liberty. The speaker reiterated that crime prevention needs to support young people by working with youth.

The fourth speaker, a representative of UN-Women, underscored **the importance of intersectional data**, including specific data on gender and age to reveal large implications of the data and how different policies impact those of different genders and ages. She highlighted the RESPECT Framework (Relationship skills strengthened, Empowerment of women, Services ensured, Poverty reduced, Environments made safe, Child and adolescent abuse prevented and Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms) as a best practice and framework to counter violence against women and girls. In addition, she mentioned another UN-Women program, the “Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative”, which empowered local communities and civil society organizations on the ground to implement their own creative solutions to make public spaces safer for women and girls and was successfully implemented in 54 cities in 32 countries.

Conclusion

The High-level Debate featured informed and constructive contributions from high-level speakers, Member States representatives and panelists on best practices for the meaningful inclusion and participation of young people in crime prevention spaces. The event offered many practices and policy recommendations to better involve young people in crime prevention efforts and was also aimed at underlining the benefits of multi-dimensional and collaborative approaches to finding practical and sustainable solutions through increased partnerships between national and local institutions, the United Nations, civil society and the private sector in effective and just crime prevention and criminal justice responses.