

UNODC Executive Director's Remarks
Opening of the 32nd Session of the Commission on
Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Monday, May 22, 2023, 09:00 AM, M Plenary

Ambassador Mary Mugwanja,

Chair of the 32nd session of the Commission on
Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice,

Ambassador Csaba Kőrösi,

President of the 77th session of the United Nations
General Assembly,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be with you today to open the
thirty-second session of the Commission on Crime
Prevention and Criminal Justice.

I would like to start by welcoming the President of
the General Assembly, the first-ever PGA to attend this
Commission, reflecting his strong commitment to justice
and rule of law and building societies' resilience to crime,
as an enabler to achieve the SDGs.

Ambassador Kőrösi is a strong advocate for swift
and united action to step up progress towards the
Sustainable Development Goals, and he has called for
“gamechangers” to achieve this.

As we approach the SDG Summit later this year, I would like to add my voice to his.

This Commission has a vital contribution to make in driving forward the SDGs, particularly SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions.

And I reiterate what the PGA has said: the SDGs are indivisible and mutually reinforcing. SDG 16 is a core component of the 2030 Agenda and an enabler for all of its remaining goals.

Countries and societies are best placed to pursue their development aspirations when the rule of law prevails, when access to justice is available to all, and when people are protected from violence and exploitation.

At the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda, the indicators of our prospects to achieve SDG 16 are not encouraging.

Between 2015 and 2021, an estimated 3.1 million people lost their lives to intentional homicides.

A moderate decline in homicide rates in 2020, attributed to COVID-19 restrictions, was quickly reversed in 2021.

Justice remains out of reach to many, and I am glad to see that this will be addressed in your thematic discussion on access to justice.

Around 30 per cent of the world's prison population continue to be held without trial, suggesting a justice deficit.

Justice for victims is also often out of reach, and more so for women, the vulnerable, and the marginalized.

Meanwhile, flashpoints of instability and conflict on virtually every continent are subjecting more people to the dangers of organized crime and violence, and leaving justice further out of reach.

Persistent diversion of firearms into the illicit market is fuelling more violence.

Drug trafficking and other criminal enterprises continue to generate illicit financial flows, while corruption and economic crimes are depriving countries of billions of dollars.

The number of forcibly displaced people on record across the world surpassed 100 million for the first time last year, fleeing conflict and strife.

So many of them are left at great risk of exploitation, and with little hope of criminal justice remedies if they are victimized, particularly as instability erodes institutions and challenges governance.

To tackle these challenges and close the gaps, we need renewed commitment.

At the CCPCJ, you can help lay the foundations for stronger institutions capable of fostering integrity, human rights and the rule of law, delivering on the 2030 Agenda, and gaining the trust of young people and future generations.

You can pave the way for important steps on the national level, such as reducing pretrial detention, ensuring timely access to justice, and making more effective use of alternatives to imprisonment.

And you can lead the way on new challenges and opportunities, including the use of digital technologies in the administration of justice, while accounting for the digital divide and ensuring compliance with human rights standards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

UNODC is working with you to strengthen criminal justice responses.

In 2022, our Office supported over 50 countries in strengthening equal access to justice, preventing crime and violence, addressing the justice needs of women and children, and promoting prison reform.

In December, we launched a new Global Programme on People-centred Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Reform.

We also continue to provide technical support and build capacities across the criminal justice chain, to help Member States interdict illicit flows, disrupt criminal networks, and fight impunity.

And we are supporting effective, accountable and inclusive measures to prevent and counter terrorism through the Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Terrorism, launched last October.

UNODC's field network, comprising of 133 offices, allows us to tailor our support and maximize regional impact — from Africa, where our implementation has surpassed 100 million dollars following the launch of our Strategic Vision for the continent; to South-Eastern Europe, where we have moved our regional office to Istanbul to be closer to field operations; to South Asia, where we are working with new partners to launch a new Regional Programme later this year, and beyond.

Our Office is also engaged within the UN System to put Our Common Agenda into action, including the elaboration of a New Agenda for Peace and a New Vision for the Rule of Law.

UNODC will continue to be your partner in fostering societies and institutions resilient to crime and violence.

Excellencies,

This session of the Commission will take stock of the important work done in the follow up to the 14th Crime Congress, and will take the first steps towards the next Crime Congress, scheduled for 2026.

I take this opportunity to thank the United Arab Emirates for their readiness to host this important meeting.

The next Crime Congress will set the normative agenda on crime prevention and criminal justice for the following five years.

It will focus on accelerating crime prevention, criminal justice, and the rule of law, to protect people and planet and achieve the SDGs in the digital age, and it will be a vital window of opportunity to make forward strides and address new priorities.

I am confident that the CCPCJ will play its central role, by setting the stage for strong commitments and bold action.

You can count on UNODC's support.

Thank you, and I wish you a constructive session.