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**Fifteenth United Nations Congress on
Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice**

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Discussion guide

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I. Introduction

1. The present discussion guide has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [78/223](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network, to prepare a discussion guide for the regional preparatory meetings and for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in a timely manner in order to enable those meetings to be held as early as possible in 2025.¹

2. In that resolution, the General Assembly decided that the main theme of the Fifteenth Congress would be “Accelerating crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: protecting people and planet and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the digital age”.

3. In the same resolution, the Assembly approved the following provisional agenda for the Fifteenth Congress, finalized by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its thirty-second session:

1. Opening of the Congress.
2. Organizational matters.
3. Advancing innovative and evidence-based crime prevention strategies towards social, economic and environmental development.
4. Promoting people-centred, inclusive and responsive criminal justice systems in a world of continuous change.
5. Addressing and countering crime – including organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations – in new, emerging and evolving forms.
6. Working better together to elevate cooperation and partnerships, including technical and material assistance and training, at the national, regional and international levels, in crime prevention and criminal justice.
7. Adoption of the report of the Congress.

4. In addition, the Assembly decided that the following issues would be considered in workshops within the framework of the Fifteenth Congress:

- (a) Building resilient societies, with a focus on protecting women, children and youth: fostering engagement, education and the culture of lawfulness;
- (b) Ensuring equal access to justice for all: towards safe and secure societies while respecting the rule of law;
- (c) Getting ahead: strengthening data collection and analysis to better protect people and planet in times of new, emerging and evolving forms of crime;
- (d) Turning the digital age into an opportunity: promoting the responsible use of technologies in crime prevention and criminal justice.

5. In its resolution [78/223](#), the General Assembly decided that, in accordance with its resolution [56/119](#), the Fifteenth Congress would open with a high-level segment at which States would be invited to be represented at the highest possible level, for example, by Heads of State or Government, government ministers or attorneys general, and that representatives would be given an opportunity to make statements on the topics of the Congress.

6. In the same resolution, the Assembly also decided that, in accordance with its resolution [56/119](#), the Fifteenth Congress would adopt a single declaration, to be

¹ The present guide is an updated version of the text contained in E/CN.15/2024/CRP.1, which was prepared for consideration by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at the regular part of its thirty-third session, held in May 2024. The text of the guide has been updated to reflect recent developments.

submitted to the Commission for its consideration, and that the Commission would give due consideration to the report of the Fifteenth Congress. In the subsequent resolution on modalities, the Commission was requested, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/184, to begin to prepare, at intersessional meetings to be held following the regular part of its thirty-fourth session and well in advance of the Fifteenth Congress, a structured, short and concise draft declaration with a robust overarching political message addressing the main topics to be discussed at the Congress, taking into account the outcomes of the regional preparatory meetings, consultations with relevant organizations and entities and the relevant discussions held in preparation for the Congress, as well as the mandate and objectives of the United Nations congresses on crime prevention and criminal justice. In addition, Member States were encouraged to finalize their negotiations of the Abu Dhabi declaration in a timely manner prior to the commencement of the Fifteenth Congress so that the declaration could be adopted on the opening day of the Fifteenth Congress, thereby following the approach taken in the preparations for the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Congresses. Furthermore, it was decided that the Commission would give due consideration to the report of the Fifteenth Congress during the in-session thematic discussion at its thirty-fifth session.

7. Also in its resolution 78/223, and as reiterated in the subsequent resolution on modalities negotiated within the Commission in May 2024, participants in the regional preparatory meetings were urged to examine the substantive items on the agenda and the topics of the workshops of the Fifteenth Congress and to make action-oriented recommendations to serve as a basis for the draft recommendations and conclusions for consideration by the Congress.

8. In this context, it should be recalled that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/152, the United Nations congresses on crime prevention and criminal justice, as a consultative body of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, are to provide a forum for:

(a) The exchange of views between States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individual experts representing various professions and disciplines;

(b) The exchange of experiences in research, law and policy development;

(c) The identification of emerging trends and issues in crime prevention and criminal justice;

(d) The provision of advice and comments to the Commission on selected matters submitted to it by the Commission;

(e) The submission of suggestions, for the consideration of the Commission, regarding possible subjects for the programme of work.

9. The present discussion guide, which outlines the overall theme of the Fifteenth Congress and the substantive items included in the provisional agenda, has been prepared with a view to stimulating discussion of issues of major concern and identifying the main policy elements for consideration and action by the Congress. It will also facilitate substantive discussion of the topics to be covered by the workshops to be conducted within the framework of the Congress.

II. Main theme of the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: “Accelerating crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: protecting people and planet and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the digital age”

10. Effective crime prevention and criminal justice face constantly evolving threats and have to be discussed in the context of broader global developments. With its forward-looking overall theme, the Fifteenth Congress – in particular its high-level

segment – will be in a unique position to trigger policy debate on advancing crime prevention and criminal justice against the backdrop of the wider United Nations agenda. In their contributions, participants are therefore encouraged to take into consideration the content of major policy documents adopted in recent years, including the outcome of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, held in 2023, as well as the Pact for the Future, the Declaration on Future Generations and the Global Digital Compact, which were adopted at the Summit of the Future, held in September 2024.

11. Protecting people and the planet has risen higher on the international agenda than ever before. The interdependent impacts of biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change on society necessitate strengthened research on the climate-crime nexus, as well as the integration of criminal justice responses as part of a holistic approach to the triple planetary crisis.

12. As a catalyst for wider progress, digital technologies – when used responsibly – have the potential to help make the world more peaceful and more just. Technologies can, however, also threaten privacy, erode security and fuel inequality. It is therefore essential for criminal justice systems to be prepared to address the impact of the rapid proliferation of new and advanced technologies.

13. The sections below on the overarching theme of the Fifteenth Congress provide a contextual lens by offering thoughts on accelerating progress in the areas of crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law while addressing the impacts of climate change and digitalization on society – towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The elements contained in this chapeau are to be considered during the high-level segment of the Congress and in conjunction with the more specific substantive elements contained in section III of the present guide, which will be considered under the respective agenda items and workshop topics of the Congress.

A. Accelerating crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law

14. Crime prevention and criminal justice are vital for peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Effective crime prevention strategies and well-functioning criminal justice institutions are at the heart of advancing the rule of law and human rights and serve as a prerequisite for effectively and sustainably combating crime, including organized crime, corruption and terrorism. However, as stated by the Secretary-General in his New Vision for the Rule of Law, the world is “experiencing a global decline in respect for the rule of law, exacerbated by escalating conflicts and weakening national institutions”. Social and economic vulnerabilities and weak rule of law continue to create opportunities for criminal activities. In this regard, it is crucial to pay special attention to countries affected by conflict.

15. Strengthening crime prevention responses is only possible through a comprehensive approach that takes into account the multiple factors that contribute to crime, based on the understanding that crime prevention is an integral element of the broader socioeconomic agenda.

16. A holistic approach is also required in order to advance criminal justice efforts. In line with the commitments identified in the Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted at the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in 2021, a well-functioning criminal justice system safeguards the rights of victims and offenders, protects witnesses and reporting persons, ensures equal access to justice for all through effective legal aid, an independent judiciary and well-functioning courts, improves prison conditions, reduces reoffending through rehabilitation and reintegration, and improves criminal investigation processes.

17. The strengthening of crime prevention and criminal justice responses can be achieved only by ensuring equal access to justice for all, in particular by respecting and protecting the rights of women and children, and by adopting measures to increase access to justice for young people, minorities and groups in vulnerable situations. It is equally important to improve the integrity, accountability and oversight of criminal justice institutions in order to strengthen community trust in those institutions.

B. Achieving the 2030 Agenda through crime prevention and criminal justice efforts

18. At the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, convened under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2023, Member States reaffirmed the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights, on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions. That need was reiterated in the Pact for the Future, adopted in 2024, in which Member States resolved to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights and fundamental freedoms, promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal justice for all and develop good governance. Member States also recognized the interdependence of international peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, and reaffirmed the importance of the rule of law.

19. In the Kyoto Declaration, Member States recognized that sustainable development and the rule of law are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, that crime is an impediment to sustainable development and that achieving sustainable development is an enabling factor for States to effectively prevent and combat crime.

20. Effective criminal justice systems may contribute to socioeconomic development by reducing violence, improving social cohesion and creating avenues for redress when rights are violated. Development, in turn, can advance crime prevention by reducing inequality – and thus also risk factors and root causes of crime – through social development programmes. Investing in effective criminal justice institutions within development programmes has a positive impact on advancing justice reform.

21. Further recognition of the interlinkages between crime prevention and criminal justice and the 2030 Agenda requires a comprehensive approach that not only enhances safety and security but also promotes equitable economic growth, social cohesion and the rule of law. Renewed efforts are needed to ensure that sustainable development, fortified by a resilient and just framework, ultimately contributes to the holistic well-being of societies on a global scale. It is therefore key that the 2030 Agenda is duly integrated into national and international crime prevention and criminal justice responses.

C. Protecting people and the planet in the framework of crime prevention and criminal justice

22. With the triple planetary crisis taking its toll on countries, communities and individuals, it is imperative to carefully review the impact of the crisis on crime and vice versa.

23. Climate change is increasingly viewed as a possible driver of crime and vulnerabilities, owing to its adverse impacts on social control, food security and the displacement of large populations, and its potential to foment conflict and to create opportunities for crime. In this context, crime prevention strategies should take into account the impact of climate change on socioeconomic development and on evolving crime trends.

24. Criminal justice systems also need to be prepared for the effects of climate change, both in terms of its direct impact on infrastructure and its indirect impact on criminal behaviour as new crimes emerge.

25. Research shows that climate change will disproportionately affect those who are already in the most vulnerable positions,² such as children, young people, women and Indigenous Peoples, creating additional risks for and threats to these populations. Enhancing access to justice in the context of climate change entails protecting the rights of those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as well as ensuring access to justice for environmental defenders.

26. Conversely, different forms of crime can have detrimental consequences for people and the planet. Illicit drug economies, with their monocultures and their disposal of dangerous chemicals, are accelerating environmental devastation. The illegal exploitation of natural resources also has negative socioeconomic consequences, threatening the livelihoods of people across multiple sectors. For example, illegal logging is a major contributor to deforestation, habitat destruction and declining biodiversity, since it is unregulated and fails to respect environmental norms. It also increases the risk of floods and landslides, and the erosion of coastal zones. Crimes in the minerals sector undermine socioeconomic development and have serious impacts on ecosystem health, livelihoods, the rule of law and human rights. Pollution crimes, including the illegal dumping of and trade in wastes, result in the global contamination of air, land and water systems, including water tables and river systems, and threaten local ecosystems, affecting animals and plants, in addition to human health.

27. Generally, crimes that affect the environment can affect the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to an adequate standard of living (art. 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) and the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation, which was recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution [64/292](#) as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.

28. In summary, it is vital that the protection of people and the planet be a priority component of crime prevention and criminal justice policies and action. It is important to improve and enhance the collection, quality, availability and analysis of data on the impacts of different forms of crime – including those that relate to biodiversity loss and pollution – on people and the planet, and to further explore the links between climate change, crime and violence. At the same time, the justice system needs to anticipate and evaluate how climate change will affect criminality and address emerging needs related to access to justice, while criminal justice decision-making should duly reflect the climate change implications of crimes committed, including the consideration of aggravating and mitigating circumstances during sentencing.

D. Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice in the digital age

29. The evolution of digital technologies has led to an increase in and diversification of forms of technology-enabled and technology-dependent crimes, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence and violence against children. As the negotiations on the draft United Nations Convention against Cybercrime³ have shown, a range of challenges are associated with the identification, disruption and prosecution of these crimes, as law enforcement and criminal justice institutions strive to keep pace with evolving technologies and patterns of offending. This, in turn,

² Hans-Otto Pörtner and others, eds., *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability – Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Cambridge University Press, 2022).

³ See [A/78/986-A/AC.291/28](#).

creates challenges in ensuring public safety and delivering equal access to justice for victims.

30. Technology is increasingly used in the criminal justice sector, both in the identification and prosecution of crime and in the delivery of legal services and access to legal information and legal aid services. Used responsibly, technology has the potential to enhance equal access to justice for all (e.g. through the ability to reach populations in remote areas) and to promote efficiency, transparency and accountability within the criminal justice system.

31. Digital technologies provide new opportunities to strengthen law enforcement efforts, enhance victim support systems and fortify overall crime prevention strategies. Harnessing the positive potential of technological innovations is imperative for gaining a comprehensive understanding of criminal methodologies. Not only does it ensure the efficacy of investigations and judicial processes, but it also bolsters the capability to respond to rapidly evolving criminal tactics.

32. Harnessing the potential offered by digital technologies in a responsible manner is of paramount importance for forestalling negative consequences and upholding human rights and the due process of law, in particular the right to privacy, thus contributing to a culture of transparency and accountability. As stated in the Global Digital Compact, in order to advance an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital future for all, it is essential to collaborate with all relevant stakeholders, including Governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical and academic communities and international and regional organizations.

III. Agenda items and workshops of the Fifteenth Congress

33. In its resolution [77/231](#), the General Assembly recommended that, building on the experience and the success of the Fourteenth Congress, all efforts be made to ensure that the overall theme, the agenda items and the workshop topics for the Fifteenth Congress be interrelated and that the agenda items and workshop topics be streamlined. In that light, and in order to facilitate the preparation for and discussions at the regional preparatory meetings and the Fifteenth Congress itself, the discussion guide clusters the substantive agenda items together with their corresponding workshop topics, on the understanding that the latter are designed to cover more specific topics and draw on practical experiences and approaches.

Agenda item 3. Advancing innovative and evidence-based crime prevention strategies towards social, economic and environmental development

A. Background

34. Crime prevention is an integral part of building safer and more sustainable societies, as reflected in the Kyoto Declaration and in the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Those frameworks, combined with the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice, underscore the importance of proactive measures to reduce crime and violence and enhance community well-being.

35. The Kyoto Declaration calls for addressing the root causes of crime through evidence-based strategies that take into consideration the needs of women, children and young people. It also calls for integrating a gender perspective to prevent all forms of gender-related violence, crime and victimization. The Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those promoting gender equality and the empowerment and safety of women and girls (Goal 5), inclusive and safe cities

(Goal 11), and peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16), highlight linkages between crime prevention and development objectives. As the presence of organized crime, income inequality and poor governance and infrastructure in rapidly urbanizing areas leads to higher crime rates, innovation in crime prevention in cities is key, especially considering that approximately 1.1 billion people currently live in slum-like conditions, with 2 billion more expected to do so in the next 30 years.⁴

36. Progress on more than 50 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets has been insufficient, and with regard to many targets, the situation has stalled or gone into reverse. Insufficient progress has been made in eliminating intimate partner violence. Moreover, in 2021 the world saw the highest number of homicides in the past two decades, partly as a result of the economic repercussions of restrictions relating to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and of the escalation in gang-related and sociopolitical violence in several countries.⁵ Around half of the victims were killed with firearms.⁶ Against this background, A New Agenda for Peace stresses that, without a dramatic reduction in conflict, violence and the spread of weapons, the 2030 Agenda will remain out of reach for a large percentage of humanity.⁷ It is clear that evidence-based crime and violence prevention needs to be prioritized, as it is cost-effective, will lower the burden on the criminal justice system, reduces prison overcrowding and contributes to sustainable development and social justice.

B. Main issues and substantive focus

1. Evidence-based and innovative strategies

37. Crime prevention has evolved significantly, driven by a growing understanding of innovative, evidence-based strategies and programmes that demonstrate impact by addressing vulnerabilities such as social and economic inequality, lack of education, mental health disorders, abuse and substance use. Crime prevention includes problem-oriented policing and focused deterrence, as well as programmes that target young, disadvantaged individuals through social crime prevention, such as outreach activities and mentoring by social workers, life skills training, family skills training, sports and cultural programmes, and educational support for disadvantaged young people. For those already in conflict with the law, appropriate evidence-based practices, including the provision of family therapy and other therapeutic and social support, help to prevent reoffending. Furthermore, access to voluntary, evidence-based drug treatment and the provision of treatment as an alternative to conviction or punishment for people with drug use disorders in contact with the criminal justice system for minor offences has been found to be effective in reducing crime and reoffending rates and can be part of an evidence-based crime prevention strategy.

2. Capturing and analysing data on crime and its root causes

38. It is crucial to gather and analyse quantitative and qualitative data on crime and its root causes to prevent crime effectively. To this end, it is important to track variations in reported crimes, including through victimization surveys or specialized surveys on intimate partner violence and trafficking in persons and surveys at schools to gather information on unreported crimes. Hospital data on intentional injuries can also help to build a picture of injuries related to crime. Digitalization offers the potential for cost-effective analyses of trends over time, provided that data protection

⁴ United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition – Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet* (2023).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Homicide 2023* (Vienna, 2023).

⁷ United Nations, “A new agenda for peace”, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9 (New York, 2023).

and human rights safeguards are upheld. The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes offers a framework of internationally agreed crime definitions. Strengthening the capacity of national authorities in setting standards for data-gathering on the basis of the International Classification remains a key action for enhancing the collection of statistical data on criminal offences and strengthening policies for prevention.⁸

3. Reaching out to those at risk

39. Innovations in crime prevention also include reaching out to specific groups who are at higher risk of becoming involved in criminal activities or of becoming victims, for example through programmes that aim to empower individuals and address behaviours associated with trauma. Examples include initiatives that support men in understanding trauma, substance misuse and violence. The delivery of gender-responsive healthcare, police, justice and psychosocial services when responding to violence against women and girls remains crucial. Victim-centred and trauma-informed institutions that provide victims with support, assistance and protection may also increase the reporting of crime, leading to reduced impunity. In this context, it is also necessary to consider how climate extremes may further increase people's vulnerability to crime and violence in the future.

40. As young people are more likely to become involved in crime compared with those in other age groups, strengthening the resilience of young people is essential. By investing in youth development and well-being, and providing opportunities for education, employment, civic participation, sports and cultural activities, societies can enhance the meaningful participation of young people and break the cycle of crime and violence.⁹

4. Community cooperation and engagement

41. Building strong partnerships among law enforcement agencies, citizens and local communities is essential for prevention in both urban and rural settings. Proactive problem-oriented and community-oriented policing strategies emphasize officers' engagement with residents, fostering trust, open communication and active participation in ensuring community safety. Building partnerships between law enforcement and local communities has also been found to be useful in preventing the spread of violent extremism, including through the development of counter-narratives.

42. Expanding crime prevention efforts beyond law enforcement through collaboration with businesses, non-governmental organizations, academia and other groups can bring fresh perspectives, innovation and resources to prevention, as reflected in resolutions negotiated within the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and in resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on the importance of prevention and promoting comprehensive, whole-of-society approaches to reduce crime and reoffending, including in the area of organized crime and violent extremism.¹⁰

43. Education and awareness-raising programmes are essential to empowering communities and individuals to recognize and report crimes and cultivate a culture of responsibility. Promoting a culture of lawfulness, crime prevention and healthy behaviours among young people through educational interventions is important to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Meaningfully engaging young people, including the most marginalized, in policy design and implementation will allow them to make positive contributions as agents of change and speaks to the vision

⁸ For more information, see the section on workshop 3.

⁹ For more information, see the section on workshop 1.

¹⁰ Economic and Social Council resolutions 2023/24 and 2023/26; resolutions 10/6, 11/2, 11/3, 11/5 and 11/6 of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

outlined in the United Nations Youth Strategy and in the recently adopted Declaration on Future Generations. What is more, States are encouraged to empower and engage young people in prevention by using social media platforms and applications and other digital tools to amplify their voice.¹¹

44. In a joint statement during the thirty-third session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice,¹² a group of delegations condemned religious hatred expressed by any means, noting that it encouraged discrimination, violence and various forms of crime that posed challenges to criminal justice systems, and underlined the need to increase global public awareness of the dangerous nature and negative impact of such acts and to ensure effective international cooperation to prevent and combat related crimes.

45. Crime prevention through environmental development and design speaks to these challenges, as it is aimed at adjusting the physical environment in a neighbourhood to reduce criminal opportunity, support positive social interaction among citizens and reduce the fear of crime, ultimately improving quality of life.

5. Use of technology

46. The responsible use of technology has the potential to play a pivotal role in innovative crime prevention. It is of paramount importance that Governments ensure that any use of technology for the prevention of crime is aligned with international law and respects human rights.¹³

47. The availability of illicit firearms is a main driver of crime and conflict. Fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies must start with the eradication of violence and the reduction of illicit arms and ammunition,¹⁴ and requires appropriate marking and digitalized record-keeping, as has been acknowledged in various resolutions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.¹⁵ Continuous monitoring is needed in order to map and disrupt illicit arms flows. New technology, such as the use of automated web-scraping software to analyse firearms seizures, can help in this regard.

C. Questions for discussion

48. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and the Fifteenth Congress may wish to consider the following questions for further discussion:

(a) How can crime and violence be prevented through multi-stakeholder efforts?

(b) Which prevention strategies can countries adopt to ensure the safety and well-being of citizens and build the resilience of individuals and communities in order to reaccelerate momentum towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals?

(c) How can innovative and effective crime prevention approaches be scaled up and implemented across the globe, including in low-resource settings?

(d) What good practices have research and evaluation identified in addressing links between local crime problems and international organized crime in the context of crime prevention?

(e) What are the main obstacles to reducing reoffending?

¹¹ Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 76/181, annex), para. 30.

¹² E/2024/30, para. 142.

¹³ For more information, see the section on workshop 4.

¹⁴ A/77/CRP.1/Add.8, annex II.

¹⁵ See, for example, CTOC/COP/2020/10, resolution 10/2, and CTOC/COP/2022/9, resolution 11/6.

(f) How can young people be meaningfully empowered and engaged in the design, implementation and evaluation of crime prevention strategies, policies and programmes? What good practices exist with regard to educating young people, understanding diversity among them and listening to the most marginalized?

(g) How can firearms control mechanisms be integrated into crime prevention strategies?

(h) What global experiences have been gained with programmes targeting perpetrators of intimate partner violence, and how effective have such programmes been when it comes to reducing recidivism?

(i) What promising practices exist in using technologies for crime prevention, and what are the human rights and gender implications in this regard?

(j) How can emerging technological tools help crime prevention through environmental development and increase safety and security in urban public space in a manner that upholds human rights?

Workshop 1. Building resilient societies, with a focus on protecting women, children and youth: fostering engagement, education and the culture of lawfulness¹⁶

A. Scope

49. Workshop 1 will focus on identifying key prerequisites in the area of crime prevention and criminal justice for ensuring that women, children and young people play active roles in building peaceful, just and resilient societies. Participants will explore the approaches that Governments and civil society, as well as the international community, can take to achieve that goal.

1. Protecting and involving women

50. Women are generally underrepresented across many sectors of society, especially in law enforcement. The underrepresentation of women is often coupled with a poor understanding of their specific security needs, which impedes their access to those services, as the institutions themselves replicate gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination in society as a whole. This problem is further exacerbated in the presence of additional unresolved trauma and physical and mental healthcare needs. This phenomenon presents particular challenges in instances where women are victims of crime and violence, and where cultural and social factors limit their engagement with law enforcement or justice services. According to the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, women are particularly vulnerable to trafficking in persons. Furthermore, while the overwhelming majority of homicides worldwide are committed against men and boys, women are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence and other serious violence in the private sphere.¹⁷

51. Conversely, the role of women with lived experience of the criminal justice system, including survivors of gender-based violence and women released from prison, is often neglected in conventional approaches to crime prevention and criminal justice. Such women with lived experience, and civil society organizations supporting or led by them, are key agents of change, not only in protecting women but also in fostering engagement, education and the culture of lawfulness. These dimensions highlight the substantial value of targeted interventions that empower

¹⁶ The text is the result of productive joint work between UNODC and the Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, with contributions from other institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network.

¹⁷ UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2023*.

women as leaders in social and community contexts and reinforce gender-responsive approaches to crime prevention and criminal justice.

2. Protecting and involving children

52. Emerging global risks expose children to increasing violence and crime, both online and offline. It is estimated that one in three Internet users is under 18 years of age, making those young users vulnerable to online violence, child sexual abuse and exploitation and child trafficking. In 2021, the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children confirmed that the production and spread of child sexual abuse material had increased exponentially over the past decade.¹⁸ In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic was reported to have increased the risk of the sale and exploitation of children. At the same time, as insecurity grows, organized criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups, become more adept at recruiting children, with the United Nations confirming 18,890 verified cases of grave violations¹⁹ in 2022 alone.²⁰ Beyond these rising challenges, obstacles to the protection of children include the neglect of their unique needs and dependencies compared with adults; a lack of political will to tackle violence against children; institutional capacity gaps and knowledge and skill deficits; coordination issues with other systems; a lack of adoption of a child-sensitive and gender-responsive approach; and a lack of shared responsibility at the national and global levels. To move forward, greater understanding and awareness of child development, needs and rights must be promoted and guide every action. A multisectoral approach to promoting the meaningful engagement and participation of children in decision-making processes that are related to them is key, including through age-appropriate, inclusive education and awareness-raising that foster children's resilience in order to enable them to become agents in their own protection from crime and violence.

3. Protecting and involving young people

53. Youth²¹ have the potential to drive substantial development, with a profound demographic dividend on the horizon, but they also face substantial challenges. Globally, nearly one in four young people was not in education, employment or training in 2022.²² Such challenges hamper their potential as agents of change, limit participation opportunities and make them more vulnerable to victimization and recruitment by criminal networks. Each year, around 200,000 children and young people are victims of homicide. At the same time, violent gangs themselves are often predominantly composed of adolescent children and young people,²³ most of whom are male. The social, economic and security challenges facing young people today may risk leaving them disenfranchised and vulnerable to antisocial behaviour or criminality.

54. Targeted interventions carried out across social and community dimensions in order to build resilience among young people will continue to be a critically important

¹⁸ International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, "The growing global threat of child sexual abuse material (CSAM)", 13 December 2021. For more information, see also UNODC, "Background paper: towards zero – an initiative to reduce the availability of child sexual abuse material on the Internet" (June 2023).

¹⁹ The six grave violations are: the killing and maiming of children; the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups; sexual violence against children; attacks against schools or hospitals; the abduction of children; and the denial of humanitarian access for children. See Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, "The six grave violations against children during armed conflict: the legal foundation", Working Paper, No. 1 (November 2013).

²⁰ United Nations, "Highest-ever number of violations against children verified in 2022, briefer tells Security Council, as speakers champion reintegration, education programmes", 5 July 2023; and [A/77/895-S/2023/363](#).

²¹ See Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) on youth, peace and security, in which the term "youth" is defined as persons 18 to 29 years old.

²² United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*.

²³ World Health Organization, Factsheets, "Youth violence", 11 October 2023. See also UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide: Killing of Children and Young Adults* (Vienna, 2019).

approach in promoting a culture of lawfulness and empowering young people to act as agents of change in strengthening crime prevention efforts and building safe and just societies and institutions. In this context, the importance of designing and adapting gender-responsive crime prevention and criminal justice policies to cater and respond to the needs and challenges facing young people cannot be overstated. Similarly, it is important to create opportunities for safe and meaningful participation by mainstreaming youth voices and actions, and to educate, engage and empower young people, including those from socially and economically less privileged groups that are usually underrepresented. This is further reinforced in the Declaration on Future Generations, in which Member States recognized the need for intergenerational dialogue and engagement, including with and among children, young people and older persons, to be taken into consideration in policy and decision-making processes in order to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations.

B. Objectives

55. The main goal of workshop 1 is to seek a deepened, multifaceted understanding of the challenges that hinder the engagement and meaningful participation of women, children and young people in building peaceful, just and resilient societies, and to consider and discuss possible solutions and innovative approaches to crime prevention and criminal justice reform to promote their active participation. It is crucial to reject a one-size-fits-all approach and advocate for evidence-based strategies and measures that are tailored to specific social, age, gender, linguistic, economic and cultural contexts.

56. In view of the above, the objectives of workshop 1 are the following:

(a) Identify the multiple challenges faced by women, children and young people by examining the various political, institutional, operational and societal norms that impact these groups, and explore how those challenges can be transformed into opportunities for empowerment, resilience-building, engagement, education and a culture of lawfulness tailor-made to each group;

(b) Discuss the role of Member States in promoting interoperability among different sectors (i.e. justice, social welfare, child protection, education and health) and in fostering the engagement and meaningful participation of women, children and young people in building peaceful, just and resilient societies;

(c) Explore how to foster the engagement of non-State actors in promoting a culture of lawfulness through public-private partnerships, academia, the media and civil society engagement;

(d) Identify and promote good practices and lessons learned from research and the evaluation of initiatives and community-based approaches to engaging women, children and young people and making societies more resilient;

(e) Discuss system-based approaches to analysing challenges and identifying innovative solutions in the areas of crime prevention and criminal justice in order to support the building of peaceful, just and resilient societies.

C. Questions for discussion

57. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and in workshop 1 at the Fifteenth Congress may wish to consider the following questions for further discussion:

(a) What key challenges prevent women, children and young people from playing active roles in society, and how can we transform those challenges into opportunities for empowerment and resilience-building?

(b) Which challenges, emerging trends and priorities need immediate attention to protect the rights and well-being of women, children and young people in society?

(c) How do the challenges faced by women, children and young people differ across political, institutional, operational and societal norms? Which political, institutional, operational or societal norms have hindered the participation of these groups? Which types of data, evaluation and research are needed to better understand these challenges?

(d) What examples of good practice and lessons learned from research and evaluation can be identified in relation to the promotion of protection for women, children and young people? What kind of measures can be taken for the protection of women, children and young people who come into contact with the justice system? How can Member States engage and empower women, children and young people with lived experience in contact with the justice system?

(e) What are the prerequisites for ensuring that women, children and young people can actively contribute to building peaceful, just and resilient societies?

(f) What strategies can be employed to shift our perception and build support for women, children and young people? How can political, institutional, operational or societal norms be taken into account to create opportunities for engagement, education and a culture of lawfulness?

(g) In what ways can States facilitate the integration of the perspectives of these groups into legal, educational, institutional and operational frameworks? How can we ensure tailored responses that address individual needs? What strategies, mechanisms and measures for women, children and young people are effective in fostering engagement, education and a culture of lawfulness?

(h) What innovative approaches and mechanisms could be proposed to create avenues for women, children and young people to express their needs and voices within legal, policy, institutional and operational frameworks?

(i) What strategies can be implemented to facilitate cooperation and coordination between law enforcement and civil society in preventing and responding to violence against children, including child sexual abuse and exploitation? Which strategies can be implemented to better prevent and respond to gender-based crime and violence?

Agenda item 4. Promoting people-centred, inclusive and responsive criminal justice systems in a world of continuous change

A. Background

58. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and the emphasis in Sustainable Development Goal 16 on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, the international community has recognized the importance of delivering equal access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive criminal justice institutions, as recently reiterated in the Pact for the Future.

59. Criminal justice systems that are people-centred, inclusive and responsive to people's needs are grounded in respect for human rights and the rule of law. Such systems ensure equal access to justice for all and are composed of services (police services, courts, the judiciary, prosecution services, prisons, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for offenders, victim support institutions and referral mechanisms to social and health services) which are humane and effective and in which integrity, accountability and effective oversight are ensured through internal and external mechanisms. People-centred, inclusive and responsive criminal justice systems mainstream gender and human rights and ensure specialized responses to children in contact with the law. They are also equipped with appropriate resources and the ability to address new challenges, emergencies and criminal trends. Furthermore, such systems address the need to ensure balanced and proportionate

responses to crime, including by ensuring that community-based and other alternatives to imprisonment are available and implemented where appropriate.

60. Criminal justice measures and policies adopted by States should be evidence-based and tailored to the needs of the population, with a focus on those who face structural barriers and discrimination. It is also essential to invest in the criminal justice workforce to ensure that it is professional, inclusive and representative of the population that it serves.

61. With a view to understanding the key developments that will affect the international community in the years to come, the *Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th Anniversary: Shaping the Trends of Our Time* identified the following five interconnected megatrends: (a) climate change; (b) demographic shifts, in particular population ageing; (c) the emergence of digital technologies in the fourth industrial revolution; (d) inequalities; and (e) urbanization. Each of those challenges is set to have implications for the effective functioning of criminal justice systems and their ability to provide inclusive, people-centred responses that ensure that no one is left behind.

B. Main issues and substantive focus

62. Across the world, justice systems are facing various obstacles to guaranteeing people-centred, inclusive justice services that are responsive to local needs. For large sectors of society, those obstacles include difficulties in accessing justice; corruption and a lack of integrity among criminal justice officials; human rights abuses and violations; a lack of resources; a lack of appropriate technical skills and expertise; and discrimination.

1. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

63. The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on societies, including shifts in institutional priorities and resource allocation, and additional challenges for the effective functioning and strengthening of criminal justice systems. However, the crisis also prompted flexibility and innovation in order to ensure the continuation of core criminal justice functions, and it promoted non-custodial measures. The use of technology for remote hearings, for example, ensured the delivery of essential justice services at a time when physical distancing measures prevented in-person court sittings.

2. Future trends and threats

64. Climate change disrupts the functioning of criminal justice systems in various ways. Environmental losses lead to human displacement, particularly in the least developed countries, which have experienced and are experiencing the greatest degrees of land degradation, spurring the outward migration of millions of people. At the same time, these countries have experienced more conflict and lower economic growth. People increasingly find themselves in situations where their only option is migration, resulting in large population flows. This can, in turn, create risks of victimization, including trafficking in persons, and a demand for justice services that will be difficult to meet. Climate change has also been found to increase or exacerbate gender-based violence.²⁴ There is a need to scale up resources overall and to provide services that are tailored to the needs of victims. New displacement patterns and struggles over depleted resources can also lead to conflict between communities and exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities. In addition, climate change affects the ability of criminal justice and prison systems to provide minimum standards of accommodation and treatment of prisoners, as extreme weather events challenge the

²⁴ See, for example, [A/77/136](#); and Itzá Castañeda Camey and others, *Gender-Based Violence and Environment Linkages: The Violence of Inequality* (Gland, Switzerland, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 2020).

ability of prison administrations to manage the growing number of people in their care.

65. Demographic shifts towards an ageing population are likely to affect various areas of the public sector, in particular health and social services, including, for instance, care for ageing prison populations. The number of older prisoners is on the rise, especially in developed countries, not only owing to higher life expectancy but also as a consequence of a hardening of sentencing practices, the increased use of imprisonment and reduced mechanisms for early release in some countries.²⁵ This affects the care of older prisoners and requires policy reform and specialized services in order to address the needs of this vulnerable group of prisoners. Furthermore, abuse of older people affects one in six people over the age of 60 and is predicted to increase, as the global population of older people will more than double, from 1 billion in 2019 to about 2.1 billion in 2050.²⁶ The number of older persons who become victims of abuse or violence is expected to grow rapidly in the future as ageism, compounded by inequalities that are exacerbated in later life, makes it more likely that older persons will experience maltreatment and abuse that may lead to patterns of violence. Therefore, effective strategies to prevent victimization in the first place and to provide victims with the necessary care and support need to be put in place to counter this risk.²⁷

66. The impact of the emergence of digital technologies on crime trends and their use by the criminal justice system, including on access to justice and the rights of victims, alleged offenders and prisoners, is discussed elsewhere in the present document.²⁸

67. Growing inequalities undermine the ability of countries to deliver justice in a people-centred, inclusive and responsive manner. As highlighted in the *Global Study on Homicide 2023*, countries with greater income inequality are more likely to have higher homicide rates than countries with less inequality. In addition, sociopolitical inequality and unequal access to resources can be a root cause of violent behaviour, while marginalized people are more likely to become victims of violence. Unequal access to education and health services has also been linked to higher levels of homicide, as have higher infant mortality rates.²⁹

68. The final megatrend with long-term impacts on criminal justice systems is urbanization. When poorly planned, urbanization can lead to higher crime rates, pollution, increased levels of inequality and social exclusion.³⁰ However, urban growth is not in itself a driver of homicide rates, and it provides an opportunity to use services and resources that cities can offer, such as higher policing levels and more accessible health services, to address risk factors associated with urban crime and violence.³¹ Exacerbated by the effects of climate change, increasing urbanization affects the growth of inequalities, which creates difficulties in delivering needs-based legal and other services to the population owing to a lack of resources to service larger groups of people, thus undermining effective justice delivery. Making institutions more people-centred and inclusive and enabling them to use existing resources responsibly and efficiently and to plan targeted interventions for the future is key to

²⁵ *Handbook on Prisoners with Special Needs*, Criminal Justice Handbook Series (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.IV.4), p. 124.

²⁶ See World Health Organization, “Tackling abuse of older people: five priorities for the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030” (2022).

²⁷ According to the report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons on violence against and abuse and neglect of older persons (A/HRC/54/26, para. 34), “abuse of older persons is recognized in many countries as a public health issue; it is a global human rights issue that requires States’ urgent attention and action”.

²⁸ See paras. 29, 46, 77, 89, 90, 102, 114, 135–142 and 146.

²⁹ UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, booklet 4, *Homicide, Development and the Sustainable Development Goals* (Vienna, 2019).

³⁰ *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World* (United Nations publication, 2020).

³¹ UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, booklet 4.

ensuring that nobody is left behind. This includes adjusting national budgets; reallocating human capacity and reconsidering the skill development needs of justice actors; and legal education and empowerment to educate people about their rights and how to access services, including for illiterate populations and children.

3. People-centred, inclusive and responsive criminal justice agencies

69. As the first responder to crime, police services across the world have faced significant criticism in recent years, and many countries have engaged in police reforms to address the need for a more inclusive, transparent and human-rights based approach to policing. Investing in education, recruitment and workforce development to ensure more representative institutions and building internal and external oversight institutions are key to ensuring that policing is human-rights based and gender-responsive.

70. Victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches to criminal justice are required in order to ensure people-centred systems, as victims and witnesses often find themselves at risk of secondary victimization in their contact with public institutions. A multisectoral approach to providing support, assistance and protection to victims of crime requires the active involvement of sectors such as the health, social and education sectors, in addition to the criminal justice system.

C. Questions for discussion

71. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and the Fifteenth Congress may wish to consider the following questions for further discussion:

(a) What measures have been taken to promote respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of law by criminal justice agencies? Are there any best practices or examples of evidence-based, people-centred and gender- and age-responsive criminal justice systems and approaches? Are there strategies, policies, programmes and initiatives that have proved successful in involving local communities, in particular marginalized and vulnerable groups?

(b) Which measures have proved effective in ensuring equal access to justice for all? Which obstacles continue to stand in the way of ensuring access?

(c) What measures have been effective in ensuring victim-centred and trauma-informed responses to victimization in order to prevent secondary victimization? Which measures have been taken to address the increased needs and victimization of ageing populations?

(d) What specific challenges have criminal justice systems experienced as a result of climate change? How well are criminal justice policies and institutions integrated into broader efforts to enhance adaptation and resilience to climate change and related crises?

(e) How well prepared are criminal justice systems for dealing with increasing numbers of older prisoners, victims of violence against older people and other impacts of population ageing? What specific practices and lessons learned can be utilized to address related challenges?

(f) What promising practices have criminal justice systems and professionals adopted to address rising inequalities? How should criminal justice systems address prejudice and discrimination, including on the basis of age, gender, disability, race or minority group membership, and promote an inclusive approach and the participation of affected groups to reduce inequalities? How can the needs of such groups be effectively addressed, in an inclusive manner, in the development and implementation of strategies?

(g) Which threats and challenges to the integrity, transparency and accountability of criminal justice institutions have emerged in recent years? What measures have proved effective in preventing and addressing discrimination,

including on the basis of age, gender, disability, race or minority group membership, within criminal justice agencies? Are there examples of successful policies, programmes and measures to increase representation, including at the senior level, of groups that are currently underrepresented among justice actors, or that are overrepresented in other areas, for example in prison populations?

(h) How has urbanization affected the ability of criminal justice systems to provide people-centred and inclusive responses to crime? How can police and justice institutions contribute to reducing urban crime and building safer cities?

(i) How can the use of administrative data for statistical purposes be enhanced, with a specific focus on collecting relevant data on inclusive and responsive criminal justice systems, including through appropriate disaggregation? What are the main barriers to using administrative data produced by various criminal justice institutions for statistical purposes? How can administrative data best feed into evidence-based policy processes with a view to responding to the needs and experiences of persons in contact with the criminal justice system?

(j) What strategies and programmes have been successful in implementing an approach to prison management, rehabilitation and reintegration that is people-centred, inclusive and responsive?

(k) Which practices have been successful in developing and implementing individualized and comprehensive strategies that consider individual health needs, in particular with regard to the mental health needs of victims, offenders and justice personnel, in an integrated manner?

(l) How is release to the community from prison organized, especially for persons with increased vulnerabilities, such as those with physical and mental health issues, including substance use disorders, to ensure uninterrupted social and healthcare services upon release? Are there any effective and promising examples of gender-responsive release programmes?

(m) What practices have proven effective in the way law enforcement officials address crimes committed against and the abuse of smuggled migrants? What actions can be taken to address the vulnerabilities and fears of smuggled and undocumented persons with regard to reporting abuses and violence to law enforcement officials, in order for such persons to obtain justice in transit and destination countries?

(n) Which good practices can be replicated in implementing a trauma-informed, gender- and child-responsive, victim- or survivor-centred criminal justice response to trafficked persons, and how can leaders and organizations of trafficking survivors contribute to this evolving discussion?

Workshop 2. Ensuring equal access to justice for all: towards safe and secure societies while respecting the rule of law³²

A. Scope

72. Workshop 2 will address current and future challenges and innovative approaches in ensuring equal access to justice for all, with a view to developing and discussing evidence-based initiatives and policies to bring tangible improvements while identifying gaps in existing criminal justice systems and proposing forward-thinking solutions that are in line with the principles of accountability, inclusivity and representation.

³² The text is the result of productive joint work between UNODC and the Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, with contributions from other institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network.

1. Measuring equal access to justice for all

73. In order to implement impactful and evidence-based policies and initiatives to increase equal access to justice for all, it is necessary to develop methodologies that make it possible to measure people's access to justice in terms of their baseline needs as victims, witnesses or suspects, and their satisfaction with the processes and outcomes of such contact, as well as the performance of criminal justice systems in providing equal access to justice for all. Centring the needs and experiences of populations that have been excluded and faced discrimination requires new approaches to measurement that account for the lack of representation of such populations in traditional data and measurement methodologies and include the use of disaggregated data and qualitative approaches to measurement.

2. Access to justice for all: centring those who face discrimination and marginalization

74. Women, children, young people, people living in poverty, people of African descent and other people who face discrimination on the basis of race, disabilities, health conditions, religion, age or gender, people on the move, trafficked persons, Indigenous Peoples, people living in remote areas, people deprived of their liberty and people with substance use disorders have historically and structurally been excluded and faced discrimination by and within the criminal justice system in many societies. Individuals belonging to one or more of these groups face intersecting obstacles to accessing justice. To ensure equal access to justice for all,³³ criminal laws, institutions and processes must be reformed to centre those who are excluded by the justice system. New approaches must be implemented that build on legal empowerment strategies developed with and by the populations that have been excluded.

3. Access to justice and environmental justice

75. The world is facing its worst-ever environmental and climate crisis, and the impact of climate change is one of the greatest threats to the human rights of current and future generations, posing a serious risk to the fundamental rights to life, health, food and an adequate standard of living of individuals and communities across the world. Equal access to justice for all individuals and communities is key to ensuring accountability for crimes that affect the environment, including those that affect large groups of people across countries and continents and are committed by legal entities. Human rights defenders in environmental matters, such as Indigenous leaders, whistle-blowers and climate advocates, are at particular risk of being the victims of crime and require access to justice. Indigenous Peoples require access to appropriate accountability mechanisms for crimes committed against them; such mechanisms must take into account their ancestral rights, including in situations where the offenders are private companies or corporations. People displaced as a result of climate change and crimes that affect the environment may also require specific measures to ensure their access to justice, as they might be at greater risk of becoming victims of trafficking and other crimes.

4. Access to justice in formal and informal justice systems

76. A considerable number of populations across the world have limited contact with formal justice systems and have access to justice primarily through customary and traditional justice systems, in particular to resolve disputes and solve grievances. While the State must ensure that equal access to the criminal justice system is provided to all, it must, where relevant, also address links and referral mechanisms between formal and informal justice systems and invest in ensuring that informal and customary justice systems do not perpetuate inequalities, in particular those related

³³ See also General Assembly resolution [78/227](#).

to age and gender, and that they respect and fulfil human rights. Restorative justice practices can play a key bridging role between formal and informal justice systems.

5. Use of technology for access to justice

77. Technology has the potential to strengthen access to justice by, for example, allowing populations in rural areas to obtain legal information or access online services. This should not, however, be understood as a complete or equitable solution to existing gaps in service provision. Furthermore, any use of technology with the intention of increasing access to justice must necessarily safeguard against undue influence from the private sector and employ specific monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure the protection of human rights.

B. Objectives

78. The main objective of workshop 2 is to introduce evidence-based approaches to ensure that all individuals, in particular those who face discrimination and barriers to justice, can obtain resolutions to their justice problems and are able to assert their rights. Access to justice, as a fundamental element of the right to a fair trial, established in several human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 7) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 14), is generally understood as including access to courts and legal representation. However, a broader approach to access to justice was embraced through the inclusion, in the 2030 Agenda, of Sustainable Development Goal 16, in particular target 16.3 (Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all). In the absence of equal access to justice, people are unable to have their voices heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination or hold decision makers accountable.

79. In view of the above, the workshop will seek to achieve the following objectives:

(a) Discuss and introduce access to justice as an essential element of a fair, humane and efficient criminal justice system that is based on the rule of law, and as an enabler for reaching many other Sustainable Development Goals, as underlined in the Pact for the Future and articulated by the Secretary-General in his New Vision for the Rule of Law;

(b) Present how Member States are guaranteeing that their laws, institutions and processes allow all individuals to obtain redress or effective legal protection without discrimination on any ground;

(c) Present successful approaches to addressing the specific needs of each victim, witness or offender, using an intersectional approach, also taking into account underlying social, political and economic structures that foster inequality;

(d) Review evidence-based, victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches to ensuring access to justice for victims of crime through, inter alia, restorative justice approaches, with the objective of providing outcomes other than solely the conviction of an offender and contributing rehabilitation and compensation for victims;

(e) Exchange information about the impact on equal access to justice for all of providing specialized legal aid services for victims and offenders.

C. Questions for discussion

80. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and in workshop 2 at the Fifteenth Congress may wish to consider the following questions for further discussion:

(a) What evidence-based methods to measure equal access to justice for all are available to establish baselines and measure and evaluate impact? Are there any evidence-based research, evaluation and data analysis methods to identify the main

legal problems in criminal justice processes faced by the population, in particular by minorities and disadvantaged communities, and their experiences in dealing with such problems?

(b) What laws, institutions and processes have exhibited a positive impact on increasing equal access to justice for all and centring those who have historically faced discrimination and exclusion? What obstacles continue to stand in the way of ensuring access? What measures have proved effective in promoting legal education and knowledge, as well as legal empowerment, among the public, in particular among marginalized and vulnerable communities?

(c) What measures would be required of Member States to improve access to justice for victims of crimes that affect the environment and climate change, including by protecting human rights defenders? What concrete steps can Member States take to ensure access to justice for persons displaced or adversely affected by environmental or climate crises, including those who become victims of crime?

(d) What measures can be taken to ensure children's access to justice, including in the context of climate change?

(e) Which evidence-based approaches ensure efficient referral mechanisms between informal and customary justice systems and the criminal justice system, with a view to ensuring increased access to justice for all and human rights protection? How can restorative justice processes contribute to equal access to justice for all?

(f) What measures and oversight mechanisms are effective in ensuring that the responsible use of technology contributes to equal access to justice for all and not to increased bias and discrimination? Is there evidence of uses of technology that increase equal access to justice for all, and what are the necessary safeguards?

(g) What promising practices exist in mainstreaming a gender perspective into measuring and evaluating equal access to justice and enhancing gender equality in access to justice, including in relation to environmental justice, informal and customary justice systems and the responsible use of technology?

(h) What measures should be developed and implemented to ensure that equal access to justice includes, where relevant, referral to and access to services such as health services for people in contact with the law?

Agenda item 5. Addressing and countering crime – including organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations – in new, emerging and evolving forms

A. Background

81. The criminal landscape is rapidly evolving owing to the speed of technological advancements, increasing globalization and the exponential growth of global markets. Criminals have proven their agility in using new *modi operandi* and seeking out further opportunities to pursue illicit gains.

82. As recognized in actions 23 and 24 of the Pact for the Future, both organized crime and terrorism continue to pose a threat to international peace and security. Constantly evolving organized criminal and terrorist groups exploit structural changes at the local, national and international levels, take advantage of loopholes in criminal justice systems and aim to influence political and socioeconomic dynamics in their favour. Conflicts, weak governance and rule of law, and political and economic uncertainty contribute to conditions that allow organized crime, terrorism and violent extremism to thrive. In addition, organized crime has become deadlier in

the past decade, and firearms-related homicides alone now account for twice as many fatalities as all armed conflicts and terrorism combined worldwide.^{34,35}

83. Moreover, Member States are confronted with the need to increase their response to and cooperation in matters relating to new and emerging forms of crime. To address this need, policymakers and practitioners are required to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate comprehensive and evidence-based policies to prevent and combat those forms of crime, taking into consideration their transnational nature.

84. In the longer term, it will also be important to consider the potential for criminal conduct in outer space, in view of the increasing human activity in that area and the lack of a regulatory framework to address crimes committed in space.

B. Main issues and substantive focus

1. Organized crime and its evolution in the digital age

85. Crime is continuously evolving and adapting. Many factors, including globalization, conflict and weak rule of law, climate change and technology, have had an impact on this evolution.

86. Drug and firearms trafficking, the smuggling of migrants, as well as crimes involving the exploitation of human beings, such as trafficking in persons, remain principal areas of criminal activity that are evolving and need to be addressed. Firearms trafficking networks, for example, seek new methods and trafficking routes, adapting to changes in legislation, technology, supply sources and demand, and may interact with petty criminals, terrorists and non-State armed groups alike.

87. Moreover, organized criminal groups misuse the growing global markets and ever-accelerating advancements in technology for criminal purposes. Therefore, data on different criminal markets and their development are fundamental to understanding crime trends and devising, evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of targeted prevention measures and countermeasures, including evidence-based comprehensive strategies against organized crime.

88. In all forms of crime, technology acts as a force multiplier. Organized criminal groups can facilitate and expand their illicit criminal activities, including through the criminal misuse of artificial intelligence. Human traffickers, for example, use technology at every step of the trafficking process, including in the targeting, recruitment, exploitation and control of victims, and as a means of widening their reach to greater numbers of clients. An increasing share of human trafficking acts is committed exclusively online.³⁶ The illicit online trade in controlled substances, firearms and other commodities via the clear and dark web is also growing, supported by the use of, inter alia, anonymity and encryption features. Moreover, technological developments have massively transformed the illicit manufacture of firearms, their parts and ammunition. In some regions, the majority of firearms seized at crime scenes are now homemade “ghost guns”, produced with “buy, build, shoot” kits purchased online and shipped by parcel post. Similarly, on the basis of online blueprints, new-generation 3D printers and computerized numerical control (CNC) milling tools permit the manufacture of firearm parts at home.

89. The rapid expansion of online connectivity has also increased the risk of cybercrime, including cyberattacks and the use of malware.³⁷

³⁴ See also paras. 36 and 47.

³⁵ See UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide: Killing of Children and Young Adults*; and UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2023*.

³⁶ For example, this is the case when traffickers use grooming techniques on social media platforms to exploit children and young adults online, for forced prostitution or the development of online child sexual abuse material. See [CTOC/COP/WG.4/2021/2](#), para. 5.

³⁷ See also para. 29.

90. Criminal justice actors need to keep abreast of the rapidly evolving forms of the criminal misuse of technologies and update criminal justice responses throughout the entire process of prevention, detection, reporting, investigation and prosecution. In the process of creating institutional capacities to counter cybercrime, specialized investigation and prosecution units have proved to be effective, together with digital forensics experts and laboratories. They are needed not only for the investigation of cybercrime, but also to support other law enforcement units in the investigation of crimes enabled by information and communications technologies.

91. At the normative level, universal binding standards are needed to address these evolving challenges related to the criminal use of information and communications technologies. The Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes, established by the General Assembly in its resolution [74/247](#), finalized the draft convention against cybercrime on 9 August 2024.³⁸ The draft convention establishes offences against the integrity, confidentiality and availability of electronic data and information and communications technology systems and against related forgery, theft and fraud, and offences relating to child sexual abuse and exploitation material and the grooming of children, the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images and the laundering of proceeds of crime. The procedural measures envisaged in the draft convention adapt traditional means and methods of criminal investigations to the information and communications technology environment and include the preservation, search and seizure and interception of electronic data. Those procedural measures will help to ensure effective international cooperation in the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of the offences established in accordance with the convention, as well as in the sharing of electronic evidence of serious crimes, including those established in accordance with other applicable United Nations conventions and protocols. The draft convention contains strong human rights safeguards and will enter into force after at least 40 States have become parties to it. In accordance with the draft resolution that was approved by the Committee for consideration and adoption by the Assembly, and to which the draft text of the convention was annexed, the Committee will reconvene to elaborate draft rules of procedure for the future conference of the States parties to the convention and to begin discussions on a protocol supplementary to the convention two years after the adoption of the above-mentioned documents by the Assembly.

2. Terrorism in new, emerging and evolving forms

92. The nature, scope and geographic spread of the terrorism threat creates significant challenges for Member States to adapt to ever-evolving operational modalities.

93. Like organized criminal groups, terrorists are increasingly using new and emerging technologies to commit, incite, recruit, fund, plan and carry out terrorist attacks. They have also diversified their financing models through the use of cryptocurrencies and markets on the dark web. Terrorists may also exploit, among other technologies, 3D printing, geolocation technologies, facial recognition software and the weaponization of commercial drones. To counteract those phenomena, Member States must be provided with the relevant tools and resources and with tailored capacity-building on how to harness new technologies to detect those acts and to ensure that human rights and due process safeguards are upheld at all stages of the criminal justice process.

94. There has also been a rise in terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief, requiring Member States to put in place measures to detect and respond to those new threats.

95. The international community is also increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing the root causes and drivers of violent extremism as part of any long-term

³⁸ See [A/78/986-A/AC.291/28](#).

efforts to address terrorism. It is therefore imperative to develop and implement comprehensive, whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches involving civil society organizations, victims of terrorism, women and young people, among others.

3. New and emerging forms of crime and linkages between organized crime and terrorism

96. Criminals involved in organized crime and terrorism are also making significant profits from new and emerging forms of crime. Crimes that affect the environment are among the most profitable crimes, and the involvement of criminal groups, for example in minerals, timber or waste trafficking, is likely to grow. Those crimes deprive Governments of vast revenues and undercut legitimate businesses and markets. In view of the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), comprehensive action against crimes that affect the environment, including trafficking in wildlife and waste trafficking, is a global imperative. Other crimes, such as organized fraud and trafficking in cultural property and falsified medical products, have also gained increasing global attention and need to be addressed more comprehensively.

97. Consideration needs to be given to making the above-mentioned forms of crime, in appropriate cases, serious crimes as defined under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in order to bring them under the scope of the Convention and facilitate international cooperation.

98. Terrorists are increasingly benefiting from linkages with organized crime in its different forms, such as trafficking in drugs, natural resources and cultural property, to fund and support their efforts. Those linkages thrive, in particular, in areas with porous borders and weak governance. In connection with both organized crime and terrorism, criminals benefit from multiplying maritime and air travel and trade routes, with limited law enforcement controls, allowing illicit goods and high-risk passengers to cross sea, air and land borders undetected. Criminalizing the travel of foreign terrorist fighters, as required by relevant resolutions of United Nations bodies, therefore also needs to be considered.

4. Cross-cutting considerations

99. Securing electronic evidence located in another jurisdiction or on cloud-based servers poses challenges in both transnational organized crime and counter-terrorism investigations, particularly as these matters are time-sensitive and require quick international cooperation responses. The role of communication service providers in criminal justice and international cooperation matters remains critical. Of equal importance is the capacity of law enforcement and judicial authorities to cooperate with communication service providers based in other countries.

100. Addressing money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism are among the most effective tools for combating organized crime and terrorism, but remain a challenge and are still far too often neglected. In particular, trade-based money-laundering, asset forfeiture, the misuse of virtual assets and Internet gambling require more attention.

101. Member States must develop and implement effective regimes for preventing and combating money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism, including by building the capacity of law enforcement and government agencies to combat illicit financial flows. Furthermore, measures must be adopted in order to more effectively promote inter-agency cooperation between intelligence, law enforcement and prosecution agencies on intelligence-based investigations to disrupt terrorist financing. Proactive financial investigations linked to the investigation of other forms of organized crime need to be prioritized to identify beneficial owners, confiscate and return the proceeds of crime and disrupt illicit trafficking networks. Member States also need to support and make better use of existing asset recovery inter-agency networks.

5. Human rights and gender considerations

102. Member States need to be proactive in strengthening preventive, law enforcement and judicial capacities to effectively respond to the evolving nature of crime and terrorism. Technology-based tools can strengthen investigation capacity and provide innovations for addressing crime-related threats. However, utilizing these tools also requires States to ensure full respect for human rights and the rule of law and to guarantee privacy and data protection in order to prevent discrimination, abuse and misuse.³⁹

103. The mainstreaming of gender and human rights perspectives in national strategies to prevent organized crime and terrorism improves understanding of the multiple facets, manifestations and consequences of these crimes and supports the design of more effective and evidence-based preventive approaches. Furthermore, the role of gender in organized crime and terrorist cases may reveal various challenges that must be acknowledged and addressed by Member States, including the ways in which women face gender-specific difficulties when attempting to access justice and seek remedies as victims of such crimes.⁴⁰

C. Questions for discussion

104. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and the Fifteenth Congress may wish to consider the following questions for further discussion:

(a) How can comprehensive, whole-of-society strategies to prevent and counter organized crime and terrorism be used to enhance and streamline national and regional responses?

(b) Which policies, measures and best practices need to be considered to strengthen and foster international cooperation to combat organized crime, terrorism and new and emerging forms of crime? How can multilateral instruments, such as the Organized Crime Convention, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and international legal instruments for combating terrorism, be best utilized for this purpose?

(c) Which legislative, regulatory and practical steps can Member States take to address technological advancements and the evolution of crime, including organized crime and terrorism, and to protect victims?

(d) Which technological advancements should be given more attention to strengthen the criminal justice capacity of Member States to prevent and counter, in particular, organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as their increasing interlinkages? What state-of-the-art technology should Member States invest in to remain capable of responding adequately to these specific crimes while also protecting human rights and due process safeguards?

(e) How can collaboration with technology companies be used to identify and develop tailored responses to risks posed by the use of information and communications technologies, including artificial intelligence and the darknet, for criminal purposes?

(f) What are the main challenges encountered in, and the lessons learned from, the cooperation of competent national authorities with communication service providers located overseas? What problems are posed by the involvement of different legal frameworks, approaches, requirements and procedures, and which solutions can be offered as good practices?

(g) How can the protection of human rights be better integrated into law enforcement and criminal justice responses addressing organized crime and terrorism

³⁹ For information on the impact that such tools may have on the protection of human rights, such as the right to privacy, and on the rule of law, see paras. 29, 114, 134, 140 and 141.

⁴⁰ See also para. 59.

in all its forms and manifestations, including new, emerging and evolving forms of those crimes?

(h) How can the identification, assessment and understanding of risks of money-laundering and financing of terrorism, including the activities of virtual asset service providers, be strengthened?

(i) How can support for the regional inter-agency asset recovery networks be strengthened and better utilized to combat illicit financial flows?

(j) What good practices have research and evaluation identified in relation to the development and implementation of inclusive, gender-responsive and human rights-sensitive strategies to prevent and respond to serious crimes, including organized crime, trafficking in persons and corruption?

Workshop 3. Getting ahead: strengthening data collection and analysis to better protect people and planet in times of new, emerging and evolving forms of crime⁴¹

A. Scope

1. Data collection and analysis as the basis for policy development

105. In the Pact for the Future, Member States committed to seizing the opportunities presented by science, technology and innovation for the benefit of people and the planet. Therefore, the collection and analysis of and reporting on data are key. Crime and criminal justice data are needed to understand the dynamics of crime, the situational context and the response of the criminal justice system. Moreover, gender-disaggregated data are needed to provide an informed, gender-sensitive and evidence-based perspective. The baseline for data collection and analysis is provided by national and subnational crime and criminal justice statistics systems. Many different methodologies exist for the collection, analysis and reporting of both quantitative and qualitative data on crime and criminal justice processes, and the most appropriate approach depends heavily on the specific phenomenon under investigation.⁴² The scope and challenges related to these systems have been described in previous United Nations documents.⁴³ International standards and norms, as well as common concepts, definitions and methodologies, support the production of high-quality, comparable data for national and international reporting.

106. A data-collection system based on event-based reports can produce detailed information on individual crime incidents using a wide variety of disaggregating variables. The resulting disaggregated data can reveal policy-relevant details that would otherwise remain obscure and can enable evidence-based policymaking, which is crucial for improving access to justice and ensuring a people-centred approach.

107. Measuring emerging and evolving forms of crime, such as cybercrime, financial crimes, corruption, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants, the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, firearm parts and ammunition, and

⁴¹ The text is the result of productive joint work between UNODC and the Thailand Institute of Justice, with contributions from other institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network.

⁴² The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes and the statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls are examples of international tools that guide the collection of standardized data. Guidelines and standards also exist on victimization and corruption surveys, criminal justice assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and standardized methodologies, such as the guidelines for the production of statistical data by criminal justice institutions.

⁴³ See [A/CONF.234/8](#), [E/CN.3/2013/11](#) and [E/CN.3/2022/14](#).

trafficking in cultural artefacts, is particularly challenging. Those crimes are multifaceted and cannot always be captured in traditional crime statistics.

108. Crimes that affect the environment, such as illegal deforestation and forest degradation, wildlife crime, crimes in the fisheries and minerals sectors and waste crimes, pose significant threats to the planet, leading to biodiversity loss, habitat destruction and resource depletion. Tackling those issues requires a data-centric approach in which environmental statistics, satellite imagery and sensor data are integrated into criminal justice databases. Furthermore, depending on the jurisdiction, the underlying conduct may be subject to criminal, administrative or commercial law. For this reason, new data and analytical approaches are needed to improve prevention, law enforcement and disruption efforts in order to better protect people and the planet. Collaborative efforts across sectors, including environmental protection agencies, local communities and international organizations, are essential to ensuring a comprehensive and effective response.

2. New data sources

109. A large proportion of crime, in particular new, emerging and evolving forms of crime, remains “hidden”, undetected and unreported to the authorities. Recording, assessing and understanding such crime requires improved utilization of both existing data tools (e.g. the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes) and different sources of information that supplement “traditional” crime statistics, such as data and information from other sectors, including the health sector, environmental ministries, utilities, social welfare services, banking and financial services, the insurance sector and other private sector actors. Such other sources may also aid in identifying, at an early stage, changes in criminals’ *modi operandi* that would not easily be detected from crime statistics alone.

110. Protecting the planet from crimes that affect the environment is an area where data are particularly lacking. Improved data creation and collection, including crime statistics, where relevant, and the identification of additional data sources are needed to help address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Integrating data from satellite imagery, sensor networks and environmental monitoring databases is crucial. Community reporting and citizen science initiatives can also serve as valuable data sources, contributing to the early detection of environmental violations and changes in criminal *modi operandi*.

111. Big data has a potential role to play in the detection, monitoring, measurement, analysis and reporting of criminal activity and the evaluation of related responses. The term “big data” generally refers to large amounts of data generated from sources such as social media, telephone logs, web scraping and sensors. However, gaining access to these data can be difficult owing to barriers to the sharing of data by public or private sector actors (including issues of data ownership), which are often related to the lack of open data policies or to legitimate concerns about the right to privacy. Moreover, the utilization of big data requires that national institutions have access to high-performance information technology infrastructure and staff with new skills (data scientists). New data sources such as geo-referenced data, biometrics and remote sensing each involve their own benefits and challenges. Such activities require a strong data governance framework for the criminal justice sector to specify roles and responsibilities and define principles for the collection, extraction, processing, dissemination and use of data, including for national and international reports.

3. New technologies for data analysis

112. Recent developments in artificial intelligence have produced a range of new applications in the criminal justice sector, including both simple digital automation and tools that rely on more advanced algorithms, such as machine learning or natural language processing. The more advanced systems are used for a variety of tasks, such as biometric identification (e.g. facial recognition), predictive policing to identify hotspots and optimize the use of resources, risk assessments and process optimization.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms can also play a pivotal role in addressing crimes that affect the environment. For instance, analysing satellite images with these technologies can unveil signs of deforestation or illegal fishing, thus aiding in the timely detection and response to such illicit activities.

113. Artificial intelligence systems offer numerous benefits, such as the ability to rapidly process large amounts of information of different origins and formats and to perform a wide variety of tasks, thus vastly improving efficiency and improving the analysis of crime and criminal justice data. Such systems can also aid staff in the justice sector by assisting in the execution of repetitive tasks and safeguarding their well-being by reducing their exposure to challenging material (e.g. child sexual abuse material).

114. However, the application of artificial intelligence systems can involve a number of challenges and limitations that need to be addressed.⁴⁴ Chief among them is the risk of algorithmic bias, which can replicate existing patterns of discrimination potentially reflected in historical data. Another consideration relating to the application of such systems is the lack of transparency, since the processes leading to system outputs are typically difficult, if not impossible, to fully understand and explain (the “black box problem”). Decisions in the criminal justice sector should, in general, be transparent, based on legal justifications, rendered understandable to the individuals affected, and open to scrutiny. The deployment of artificial intelligence-based solutions thus requires sufficient safeguards to ensure the protection of integrity and human rights in the collection and analysis of data, in line with international standards and norms.

4. Balancing the promotion and protection of data

115. Developing data governance frameworks on crime and criminal justice can help Member States to define the proper balance between the use and reuse of data for the public good, the protection of privacy and the avoidance of misuse. Due consideration should be given to issues such as interoperability, accountability, transparency, quality, security and protection, and equitable, fair and non-discriminatory approaches across the life cycle of crime and criminal justice data (from data generation, extraction and collection to dissemination and use) in order to enhance the use of, trust in and equity of data.

116. According to the first Fundamental Principle of Official Statistics, data should be made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies and recognize citizens’ entitlement to public information.⁴⁵ This is a clear call for “open data”, which implies that data can be freely used, reused and redistributed by anyone, anytime, anywhere.⁴⁶ Providing crime and criminal justice statistics in such a manner would serve to inform the public and open up the possibility for third-party researchers to contribute to the analysis of crime. To that end, data could be made readily available in a machine-readable, non-proprietary format and be supplemented with relevant metadata. Given the sensitive nature of crime and criminal justice data, however, statistics should be published only in a form that respects the relevant regulatory frameworks concerning data privacy and security. Moreover, to ensure privacy, the collection and analysis of data should be closely aligned with responsible data practices (e.g. anonymization, informed consent of the data subject and proportionality to the act), and clear safeguards should be established to protect the rights and well-being of vulnerable members of society, such as children.

⁴⁴ See, for example, [A/HRC/48/31](#).

⁴⁵ General Assembly resolution [68/261](#).

⁴⁶ Open Data Charter, “ODC Principles”. Available at <https://opendatacharter.net/principles/>.

B. Objectives

117. The objectives of workshop 3 are the following:

(a) Discuss which types of data are most needed in order to inform effective crime prevention and criminal justice policies that can tackle new, emerging and evolving forms of crime, including those that relate to protecting the planet, by identifying, at as early a stage as possible, trends and patterns in crime and the response to crime;

(b) Address challenges related to the collection, analysis and governance of high-quality, comparable statistics and data related to crime and criminal justice, and ways to develop more accurate, timely and cost-effective methodologies for new, emerging and evolving forms of crime, including those that relate to protecting the planet, especially for analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of policies to prevent and respond to such crime;

(c) Discuss how to improve the collection of data on crimes that affect the environment, including ways to increase engagement with existing tools, the identification of relevant authorities, other data sources and challenges to be overcome;

(d) Discuss the potential of new data sources and new technologies to collect or extract and analyse data, and how to address the challenges involved;

(e) Consider how to improve local, national, regional and global capacity to collect, analyse and report data from those new sources;

(f) Identify challenges in cooperation between statisticians, data scientists, researchers, evaluators and data analysts on the one hand, and policymakers on the other hand, with a view to better integrating data into the development of crime prevention and criminal justice strategies at the local, national, regional and global levels.

C. Questions for discussion

118. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and in workshop 3 at the Fifteenth Congress may wish to consider the following questions for further discussion:

(a) How can existing crime and criminal justice data collection and analysis efforts be strengthened?

(b) How can the private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations and other entities assist in collecting and analysing data?

(c) What good practice recommendations have been identified in research and evaluation for the development of an effective system for the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data that can produce relevant, timely, accurate and reliable data for the purpose of policy development in crime prevention and criminal justice?

(d) What innovative approaches and methodologies are needed to identify, assess and understand new, emerging and evolving forms of crime, including those that relate to protecting the planet?

(e) How can new data sources and technologies such as big data, geospatial information systems and artificial intelligence assist criminal justice agencies in preventing and combating new, emerging and evolving forms of crime, including those that relate to protecting the planet?

(f) What forms of cooperation can be developed at the regional and global levels to improve local and national data collection and analysis, including for

evaluative purposes, and access by local and national policymakers to the relevant data?

(g) How can quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis on crimes that affect the environment be improved to better address the triple planetary crisis? What unique challenges do these crimes pose to data-driven approaches, and what opportunities exist to enhance the capacity of Member States to address these crimes through innovative data use and evaluation?

(h) How can Member States develop national data governance frameworks on crime and criminal justice to ensure the responsible use and reuse of data, and what principles should guide such frameworks?

(i) Specifically, how can the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), including its field office network and centres of excellence, as well as the institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network, best assist Member States in the collection and analysis of data, in the identification of new, emerging and evolving forms of crime, including those that relate to protecting the planet, and in the integration of data, including evaluative evidence, into policymaking?

Agenda item 6. Working better together to elevate cooperation and partnerships, including technical and material assistance and training, at the national, regional and international levels, in crime prevention and criminal justice

A. Background

119. In a world of rapid change and multiple crises, including instability, resource constraints and climate change, Governments, civil society and communities must intensify their efforts to work together at the national, regional and international levels to implement effective and lasting solutions to reduce violence and deliver justice, while fostering inclusive participation and public trust in criminal justice institutions.

120. In the Kyoto Declaration and during the sessions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Member States recognized the need to enhance multidisciplinary efforts to prevent and combat crime through cooperation and coordination between criminal justice institutions and other governmental sectors and to foster multi-stakeholder partnerships with the private sector, civil society, academia, the scientific community and other relevant stakeholders. Member States also highlighted the importance of working together, and of technical assistance, including material assistance and training, taking into account the specific challenges faced by and the particular needs of requesting countries.

B. Main issues and substantive focus

1. Partnerships and cooperation at the national level

121. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and the Fifteenth Congress may wish to discuss strategies for overcoming current obstacles that hinder enhanced cooperation between criminal justice institutions and other governmental partners on the one hand, and with the private sector, civil society, academia, the scientific community and other relevant stakeholders on the other hand, and the tangible gains that can result from overcoming those obstacles.

122. With due adherence to the distinct mandates of different criminal justice actors and the limitations associated therewith, enhancing cooperation and information-sharing among those stakeholders and consolidating criminal justice data can generate significant efficiency gains and a strong evidence base for informed decision-making. Efforts should also be undertaken to mobilize support from other governmental stakeholders to embed criminal justice interventions in an all-of-government approach to public safety, the rule of law and human rights. The latter should encompass social welfare and educational, employment, protection and health support services for people in contact with the criminal justice system, including drug prevention, treatment and care services, including services that are gender- and age-responsive in nature, as well as those targeting populations at risk of stigmatization, discrimination, marginalization or exclusion.

123. There is significant potential to build equally on the expertise of and actively involve non-governmental stakeholders in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. While core functions must remain a State responsibility, the involvement of civil society, the use of community volunteers and traditional leaders, as applicable, as well as carefully designed public-private partnerships can enhance the effectiveness, relevance and legitimacy of crime prevention and criminal justice interventions. Academia can play a pivotal role in supporting policy and strategy development that is based on solid research findings.

124. The value of multidisciplinary partnerships should also be seen through the lens of the overall theme of the Fifteenth Congress and its reference to climate change and digitalization. While a dedicated workshop of the Congress will cover the use of new technologies, under the agenda item itself, Member States may wish to discuss the emerging threats that climate change poses to the operation of criminal justice systems and its potential to influence patterns of crime. The extent to which criminal justice entities are included in national climate adaptation strategies in order to maintain the continued and uninterrupted delivery of justice, including through the development and quality of respective disaster preparedness and risk mitigation plans, significantly differs among agencies within and across countries. Identifying sector-specific vulnerabilities, exchanging knowledge and experience gained in relation to suitable responses and exploring how the climate change resilience of criminal justice systems can be enhanced in a holistic manner would exemplify how Sustainable Development Goal 13 (climate action) can become an integral part of efforts to advance towards achieving Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).⁴⁷

2. Partnerships and cooperation at the regional and international levels

125. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and the Fifteenth Congress may wish to discuss strategies for advancing international cooperation to prevent all forms of crime, including those of a new, emerging and evolving nature, through depriving criminals of the proceeds of crime and building international networks of relevant criminal justice professionals.

126. Without enhanced bilateral, regional and international cooperation, the gap between the responsive capacity of Member States and the sophistication of criminal groups and their *modi operandi* may become insurmountable. This applies to categories of crime that are of a transnational nature by definition and to those that stand out in terms of complexity. In transnational criminal cases, legal systems need both a sufficient degree of harmonization and relevant institutions and procedures to support international cooperation in criminal matters, including through extradition, mutual legal assistance, the transfer of sentenced persons and of criminal proceedings, international cooperation for the purpose of confiscation, and international law enforcement cooperation.

⁴⁷ For more information, see the section on agenda item 4.

3. Technical assistance, training and material assistance

127. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and the Fifteenth Congress may wish to discuss good practices related to technical assistance in crime prevention and criminal justice, focusing on key features that should guide advisory services, training methods and techniques and material assistance, with a view to ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, innovation, sustainability and continuous compliance with the international legal framework.

128. With a view to addressing priority needs and identifying responses that are tailored to the national context, technical assistance in crime prevention and criminal justice should be based on a prior assessment, in close collaboration with the Government and further informed by consultations with other relevant stakeholders. A clear theory of change, national ownership, due consideration of South-South and triangular cooperation and a continuous focus on sustainability are preconditions for maximizing the prospects of lasting impact. Infrastructure and material assistance, where necessary, should be coupled with capacity-building, showcase the value of pilot initiatives for potential replication or form part of broader government-led criminal justice initiatives.⁴⁸

4. International legal framework and technical guidance

129. In all of the efforts described above, States should make maximum use of the practical application of the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice with a view to establishing effective, fair and accountable criminal justice systems, which serve as an indispensable foundation for efforts to address specific forms of crime.

130. As regards specific forms of crime, States should make use of the international crime conventions and protocols, in particular those related to terrorism, organized crime and corruption, including the related review mechanisms, wherever applicable.

131. Member States may wish to draw on practical tools developed to advance crime prevention and criminal justice and to strengthen international cooperation, including e-learning tools.

C. Questions for discussion

132. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and the Fifteenth Congress may wish to consider the following questions for further discussion:

(a) How can countries promote enhanced inter-agency collaboration in crime prevention and criminal justice among governmental agencies and services, and in what areas? What good practices have been identified in regional or subregional networks of justice professionals that facilitate cooperation in criminal matters, including in relation to new and emerging forms of crime?

(b) What promising models have been identified for engaging civil society, academia and the private sector in crime prevention and criminal justice, and in which areas have their contributions proved to be particularly valuable?

(c) What are the opportunities and limitations of public-private partnerships in crime prevention and criminal justice? Which core functions must be retained by the State?

(d) Which initiatives and efforts have enhanced the integration of social, educational, employment, protection and health support services in crime prevention and criminal justice?

⁴⁸ In terms of policy guidance issued by the United Nations, technical assistance in crime prevention and criminal justice should also be informed by the principles and actions contained in the New Vision of the Secretary-General for the Rule of Law (2023).

(e) Which structures, tools and analysis methods have proved effective in collecting and using crime prevention and criminal justice data for evidence-based decision-making?

(f) How can addressing questions (a) to (e) help to address shortcomings in crime prevention, policing, access to justice, victim support, prison and offender management, and gender- and age-responsive justice? How can addressing those questions help to prevent and respond to organized crime, corruption and terrorism, as well as new and emerging forms of crime?

(g) What concrete impact does climate change have on the operation of criminal justice systems? Which entities and special populations have been particularly affected? Does evidence exist that points to changing patterns of crime in jurisdictions that are particularly affected by climate change? If so, how have countries responded to those changing patterns? Which steps should be considered in order to render criminal justice systems more resilient against climate change disruptions and to reduce their environmental footprint?

(h) Which approaches have been most successful in supporting countries in enhancing the application of the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice?

(i) How can the United Nations conventions on crime, in particular those related to organized crime, corruption and terrorism, be utilized more effectively as a basis for international cooperation in criminal matters?

(j) How can the provision of training and other capacity-building for criminal justice officials be rendered more effective, with due consideration of multiplier effects and sustainability? What is the accumulated experience of partnering with and enhancing the capacity of national training institutes for the police, prosecutors, the judiciary and prison officials? What evidence base exists regarding knowledge gains resulting from e-learning or other innovative capacity-building measures in comparison to traditional in-person training?

(k) How can material assistance in crime prevention and criminal justice, including construction, refurbishment and procurement, be integrated into technical assistance most effectively?

Workshop 4. Turning the digital age into an opportunity: promoting the responsible use of technologies in crime prevention and criminal justice⁴⁹

A. Scope

133. There has been increasing international attention to the potential of harnessing technologies for the global good. The Global Digital Compact, adopted in September 2024, sets out the requirements for an “inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe and secure digital future for all” that is anchored in human rights and aimed at achieving the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary-General’s Road Map for Digital Cooperation outlines strategies to advance digital capacity-building, digital public goods, universal connectivity, digital inclusion, digital trust and security, digital human rights and digital cooperation. Those issues are also covered in the Global Digital Compact.

134. In emphasizing the importance of strengthening the positive potential of digital inclusion and digital public goods, the Secretary-General has also noted that the expansive application of technologies entails risks. “Our data is being bought and sold

⁴⁹ The text is the result of productive joint work between UNODC, the Korean Institute of Criminology and Justice and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, with contributions from other institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network.

to influence our behaviour, while spyware and surveillance are out of control – all with no regard for privacy; artificial intelligence can compromise the integrity of information systems, the media, and indeed democracy itself.”⁵⁰ This same need to assess both the positive aspects and potential risks of technology has been identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in a call for a human rights-based approach to technology “to help societies to identify ways to prevent and limit harm while maximizing the benefits of technological progress”.⁵¹

1. Human rights and the use of technology in crime prevention and criminal justice

135. Various resolutions adopted at the global level have emphasized that harnessing the positive potential of technology requires clear guidance on effective strategies to promote human rights while safeguarding against discrimination and interference with privacy and human dignity.⁵² Noting the potential for digitalization to make criminal justice systems more effective, accountable, transparent, inclusive and responsive through promoting digitalization, the Kyoto Declaration calls for adequate and effective safeguards to prevent the improper use of such technologies.⁵³

136. Moreover, in 2024, the General Assembly adopted for the first time a landmark resolution on the promotion of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems that will also benefit sustainable development for all.⁵⁴ The Assembly called upon all Member States and other stakeholders “to refrain from or cease the use of artificial intelligence systems that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights”. The Assembly also reaffirmed that “the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including throughout the life cycle of artificial intelligence systems”.

137. The efficiencies offered by digitalization have precipitated rapid growth in the use of new and advanced technologies at all stages of the criminal justice process and across all criminal justice institutions. As underlined in the Global Digital Compact, key to promoting trust in public institutions and upholding human rights in the administration of justice are the long-standing principles of open justice, and the principles of oversight and accountability for justice sector institutions and actors. The global commitment to promote equal access to justice for all and to leave no one behind underscores the importance of ensuring that all current and future applications of technology in the criminal justice sector adhere to international human rights law and the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice, with a particular focus on the core human rights principles of equality, human dignity, privacy, non-discrimination and freedom of expression and of association.

138. When used responsibly, technology offers considerable potential to assist public and private sector institutions in the prevention, detection, investigation, disruption and removal of technology-enabled and technology-dependent crime and criminal content (e.g. online scams and child sexual abuse material). Technology also offers efficiencies and increased capabilities for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of crime (e.g. through digital case management systems and strengthened international cooperation in criminal matters through networks for securely transmitting information).

⁵⁰ United Nations, “‘Our world is in big trouble’, Secretary-General warns General Assembly, urging Member States to work as One United Nations”, remarks of the Secretary-General at the opening of the General Assembly high-level general debate of the seventy-seventh session of the Assembly, New York, 20 September 2022.

⁵¹ A/HRC/48/31, para. 37.

⁵² See, for example, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/248/80/PDF/N2024880.pdf?OpenElement> General Assembly resolution 75/1, para. 13; A/HRC/48/31; A/HRC/38/47; and Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 25 (2021) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment.

⁵³ General Assembly resolution 76/181, annex, paras. 8 and 16.

⁵⁴ General Assembly resolution 78/265.

139. Used responsibly, technology has the potential to enhance equal access to justice for all through the provision of online legal information, legal aid services and victim support services. With the informed consent of all parties, remote hearings have the potential to reduce court backlogs, reduce the trauma of court appearances and overcome geographical barriers in access to service.

140. Technology can be used to enhance transparency in criminal justice processes and reduce risks of corruption, abuse of power and unlawful use of force, through the digitalization of investigation, evidence and judicial records, the recording of investigative and judicial procedures and the responsible use of vehicle and body-worn cameras.

141. Technology can also be used to detect and assist victims of crime and people in distress, with drones and satellite imagery used to detect smuggled refugees and migrants in distress at sea, and image-matching technologies used to identify victims of human trafficking and child sexual abuse.

142. With the appropriate safeguards and standards for accuracy, interoperability and data protection, technology has the potential to achieve efficiencies in several areas of the criminal justice sector, including in relation to international cooperation in criminal matters.

2. Governance and partnerships for the responsible use of technology

143. Achieving the responsible use of technology in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice requires strong oversight mechanisms and public-private partnerships that prioritize human rights by design and include rigorous human rights assessments. Public-private partnerships have the potential to actively uphold human rights by strengthening the prevention, detection and prosecution of crime and to ensure that the development of future technologies is human rights-compliant and tailored to meet evolving needs within the criminal justice sector.

144. The expansive use of private sector technologies in the criminal justice sector raises several important considerations, however, including the need to assess the implications of profit margins, to resolutely resist the privatization of essential services and to implement legislative and regulatory mechanisms for ensuring public oversight of private sector involvement in statutory criminal justice functions. Specific accountability and liability mechanisms are vital for regulating against technologies that infringe human rights and for instances in which technology companies fail to moderate and/or take down illegal content.

145. A shared public and private sector commitment is needed to preserve the digital commons and ensure that technology remains a global public good. This requires enhanced efforts to ensure equal access to digital technologies, data and knowledge – including by combating existing inequalities in digital access and skills, demonetizing data and proscribing proprietary rights over public goods.

146. Strengthened efforts are needed to assess the human rights implications of emerging technologies. This requires multidisciplinary and multisectoral research, monitoring and evaluation, and the development of legal and operational frameworks to address new and emerging forms of technology-enabled crime while also ensuring that any use of such technologies in the criminal justice sector adheres to human rights standards.

B. Objectives

147. The objectives of workshop 4 are the following:

(a) In line with the guidance in the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation and with the Global Digital Compact, to discuss practical strategies and partnerships to achieve digital inclusion, digital trust and security, digital human rights and digital cooperation in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice;

(b) More specifically, to explore strategies to promote effective, coordinated and inclusive technology governance, including the development and implementation of binding rules, between the public and private sectors to prevent and counter the use of technologies for criminal purposes, to ensure that the use of technology aligns with international law and to ensure that digital technologies and the Internet function as sustainable global public goods;

(c) To discuss strategies for enhancing digital inclusion on the basis of the principle of leaving no one behind and with particular attention to gender dimensions, intersectionality and the rights and needs of specific groups (including women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities) to enhance equal access to digital technologies, data and knowledge (i.e. the digital commons) as a facet of crime prevention strategies and as a means of enhancing equal access to justice for all;

(d) To discuss how technologies can assist with the strengthening of data collection, analysis and application in criminal justice systems, mindful also of data protection safeguards and human rights considerations, including privacy and other fundamental freedoms, such as the freedoms of movement, assembly and association;

(e) To identify opportunities to further leverage technology to identify and combat cybercrime and the malicious use of technology, including new and emerging technologies.

C. Questions for discussion

148. Participants in the regional preparatory meetings and in workshop 4 at the Fifteenth Congress may wish to consider the following questions for discussion:

(a) What are the opportunities for harnessing, further promoting or advancing the use of technologies, including new and emerging technologies, in the criminal justice system in ways that are lawful, ethical and consistent with efforts to enhance equal access to justice for all and to leave no one behind, with particular attention to the rights and needs of specific groups (e.g. women, children, people with disabilities, victims of crime and individuals who face discrimination or marginalization)?

(b) What are the primary challenges and what safeguards and monitoring and compliance mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the use of technologies in the criminal justice system aligns with international law?

(c) What would be the most effective mechanisms for governing the use of technology in the criminal justice sector, and how can the convergence of public and private interests be managed to ensure that both criminal justice services and digital technologies function effectively as sustainable global public goods?

(d) Through what mechanisms can multisectoral partnerships be strengthened for efficient cooperation between public sector bodies, including telecommunications regulators, and technology manufacturers and service providers in the commercial sector?

(e) Are there ways in which the use of technology in the criminal justice system has exacerbated the marginalization or targeting of individuals and groups already facing discrimination? For example, what gender and intersectionality implications have arisen in this regard? How can those findings be leveraged to catalyse digital inclusion?

(f) With the rapid development of technologies, what new technology-enabled crimes can be anticipated, and in what ways can technologies assist in preventing, detecting and combating such crimes while also upholding the rule of law and human rights?

(g) What mechanisms can be put in place to monitor new and emerging technologies, to prevent malicious use, address system deficiency risks and ensure the effective, lawful and responsible use of these technologies in the criminal justice sector?