



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

Abu Dhabi, 25–30 April 2026

### Report of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in San José, from 4 to 6 February 2025

#### Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction . . . . .	2
II. Recommendations . . . . .	3
A. 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”. . . . .	3
B. Substantive items and workshops. . . . .	5
III. Attendance and organization of work. . . . .	16
A. Date and venue of the Meeting. . . . .	16
B. Attendance. . . . .	16
C. Opening of the Meeting . . . . .	16
D. Election of officers . . . . .	17
E. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work . . . . .	17
IV. Adoption of the report and closure of the Meeting . . . . .	18
Annex	
List of documents . . . . .	19



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [56/119](#), on the role, function, periodicity and duration of the United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, the General Assembly decided that each congress should be preceded by regional preparatory meetings and also decided to call future congresses United Nations congresses on crime prevention and criminal justice.

2. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Lessons Learned from United Nations Congresses on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, at its meeting held in Bangkok from 15 to 18 August 2006, discussed how to incorporate regional concerns and perspectives into the preparation of the congresses. The Group stressed the importance of regional preparatory meetings as a key preparatory tool for the congresses and noted that, despite globalization and the increasingly transboundary nature of criminality, different regions of the world continued to have different concerns, which they wanted to see properly reflected in the consideration of various topics by the congresses ([E/CN.15/2007/6](#), para. 23).

3. In its resolution [78/223](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to facilitate the organization of the regional preparatory meetings for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and to make available the necessary resources for the participation of the least developed countries in those meetings and in the Fifteenth Congress itself, in accordance with past practice and in consultation with Member States. In the same resolution, the Assembly encouraged the relevant United Nations programmes, specialized agencies of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as other professional organizations, to cooperate with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress.

4. In the same resolution, the General 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 for the Fifteenth Congress and for the Congress itself in a timely manner, and invited Member States to be actively involved in that process.

5. At its thirty-third session, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice considered the draft discussion guide. In its resolution [79/186](#), the General Assembly took note with appreciation of the draft discussion guide and requested the Secretary-General to finalize it in a timely manner, taking into account the recommendations of the Commission, as well as additional comments and feedback from Member States, in order to enable the regional preparatory meetings for the Fifteenth Congress to be held as early as possible in 2025. The finalized discussion guide ([A/CONF.241/PM.1](#)) has been published and made available on the website of the Congress.

6. In its resolution [78/223](#), the General Assembly encouraged States to undertake preparations for the Fifteenth Congress at an early stage and by all appropriate means, including, where appropriate, the establishment of national preparatory committees. Also in that resolution, as well as in resolution [79/186](#), the Assembly urged participants in the regional preparatory meetings 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.

## II. Recommendations

### A. 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”

7. The Chief of the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies of UNODC, acting as the Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting, recalled that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [77/231](#), efforts had been made to ensure that the overall theme, the agenda items and the workshop topics were streamlined. She reminded participants that, since the main theme was designed to serve as an umbrella for the substantive agenda items and workshop topics, and for the discussions thereunder that would take place at the Congress, they were invited to engage in a general, aspirational discussion with regard to the relationship between the main theme and the substantive agenda items of the Congress, as well as to the policy implications of that relationship.

8. Presentations were delivered by representatives of the Secretariat introducing the main theme, substantive agenda items and workshop topics. Statements were made by the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

9. Statements were also made by the observers for the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam.

10. Statements were also made by the observers for Instituto Brasileiro de Direitos Humanos, the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the International Legal Foundation, the Research Centre for Feminist Action, Housing Works, Asistencia Legal por los Derechos Humanos and the Association for the Prevention of Torture.

#### Summary of deliberations

11. During the discussions on the main theme of the Congress, some speakers highlighted the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations in guiding the regional recommendations for the Fifteenth Crime Congress. Many speakers referred to the critical role of the rule of law and of fair, inclusive and efficient criminal justice systems in promoting sustainable development and human rights.

12. Speakers expressed concern about the increase in criminal activity in the region, including organized crime and interpersonal violence, as well as the linkages between various forms of organized crime. Speakers referred to a variety of crimes affecting the region, including drug trafficking, corruption, firearms trafficking, trafficking in persons, money-laundering, the smuggling of migrants, cybercrime, financial crimes, crimes that affect the environment such as illegal mining, gang violence and gender-based violence.

13. Speakers highlighted the need to address all forms of organized crime through the existing international legal instruments, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols.

14. International cooperation emerged as a recurring priority in effectively addressing crime, including through intelligence-sharing, cross-border operations, mutual legal assistance and extradition.

15. Several speakers called for equal access to justice for all to be at the centre of global policies on criminal justice, highlighting a number of initiatives such as the

appointment of government-funded public defenders as an effective form of legal aid provision, and the implementation of technologies for mobile justice services. The use of restorative justice was mentioned, as were alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to ease caseloads for the judiciary.

16. Some speakers welcomed the recommendations from the Expert Group Meeting on Access to Justice for All, hosted by Brazil and Canada, held in Brasilia from 9 to 11 December 2024.

17. A number of speakers highlighted the importance of asset recovery as a means of safeguarding resources to support victims and to provide for reparations, especially in cases of trafficking in persons.

18. Many speakers stressed the importance of investing in prevention as a means to address the root causes of crime, such as poverty and social exclusion, and to prioritize socioeconomic development, with a focus on youth and community engagement.

19. A number of speakers underscored the linkages between climate change and increased criminal activity, including the risk of an increase in people being displaced and in their vulnerabilities. Some speakers recalled resolution 12/4 of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which called for the identification of gaps and responses in the international legal framework on crimes that affect the environment and for the establishment of an expert group on crimes that affect the environment, and noted that the effects of crimes that affect the environment must be addressed, including in relation to their consequences for persons in vulnerable situations and Indigenous populations.

20. Cybercrime was identified as a growing global threat, and several speakers welcomed the recent adoption of the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime; Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes. The need to address cybercrime using frameworks that protected human rights was underscored in that regard.

21. A number of speakers mentioned the importance of promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of persons deprived of liberty, while guaranteeing their health, including mental health, and education, in order to reduce recidivism.

22. Speakers referred to the need for data-driven and evidence-based criminal justice policies.

23. Several speakers highlighted the alarming levels of violence against women and emphasized the need to integrate a gender-responsive approach into crime prevention and criminal justice policies in order to, inter alia, eliminate femicide.

#### **Outcome of deliberations**

24. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:

(a) Strengthen international cooperation, including systems for real-time data exchange, cross-border cooperation, extradition and mutual legal assistance;

(b) Promote cooperation at the local, national and international levels to address the challenges posed by various forms of crime, including organized crime;

(c) Strengthen domestic legal frameworks to comply with the obligations established in the Organized Crime Convention;

(d) Increase the use of asset confiscation to combat organized criminal groups and international cooperation for asset recovery in order to provide, inter alia, for adequate reparations for victims;

- (e) Strengthen action against trafficking in firearms to address violence in the region;
- (f) Strengthen access to justice for all, such as through the appointment of government-funded public defenders;
- (g) Integrate climate-resilient strategies into law enforcement operations and enhance penalties for crimes that affect the environment, while also considering the connection of such crimes to other forms of transnational organized crime;
- (h) Develop legal safeguards and strengthen policies to prevent the prosecution of victims of trafficking in persons;
- (i) Protect smuggled and undocumented migrants from crime and build trust with law enforcement agencies, provide trauma-informed training for officers handling migrant-related cases and establish hotlines for anonymous reporting of crimes against migrants and safe spaces for reporting abuse against migrants;
- (j) Strengthen cooperation with a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society and faith-based organizations and public-private partnerships, on crime prevention initiatives, such as the development of educational and vocational training programmes;
- (k) Implement human rights safeguards as an integral part of the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime;
- (l) Foster inter-institutional coordination among relevant entities involved in combating crime and consider measures to reduce the financial profit of organized crime as a way of effectively addressing this challenge.

## **B. Substantive items and workshops**

### **1. Advancing innovative and evidence-based crime prevention strategies towards social, economic and environmental development (agenda item 3); and building resilient societies, with a focus on protecting women, children and youth: fostering engagement, education and the culture of lawfulness (workshop 1)**

- 25. An introductory presentation on the agenda item was delivered by a representative of the Secretariat. Statements were made by the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Uruguay.
- 26. A statement was also made by the observer for the United Arab Emirates.
- 27. A statement was also made by the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

#### **Summary of deliberations**

- 28. During the debate on agenda item 3, many speakers emphasized the need to promote a multidimensional and whole-of-government approach to crime prevention in cooperation with relevant stakeholders. As examples of such integrated approaches, some speakers mentioned work that was being carried out jointly with health, education and psychosocial services, including in the areas of employment and vocational training, and the creation of civic spaces that provided integrated services. It was noted that crime prevention strategies should incorporate community-based programmes with the collaboration of local stakeholders. The need to develop evidence-based crime prevention policies was also mentioned by several speakers.
- 29. Several speakers noted that crime prevention and criminal justice policies must consider the needs of women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, young people and persons in vulnerable situations, as well as those suffering from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Reference was made to multidisciplinary programmes that targeted protective factors for at-risk young people, while increasing

the capabilities of local authorities in vulnerable neighbourhoods to address recruitment by organized criminal groups.

30. Some speakers mentioned the importance of cooperation between communities and local and national governments, and noted the development of local crime prevention and development plans as a good practice. The need to build trust between the criminal justice system and populations, including through community-oriented policing, was indicated by some speakers. Speakers also highlighted the importance of integrating the prevention of and responses to corruption within the criminal justice system.

31. Some speakers underscored the importance of making responsible use of technologies in crime prevention programmes, in particular through the ethical use of artificial intelligence, and of ensuring respect for human rights, including the right to privacy. The use of technology, including artificial intelligence, could increase the participation of marginalized stakeholders in crime prevention efforts, although caution was required to prevent the possible negative effects of such technology, such as breaches of privacy.

32. A number of speakers noted the importance of alternatives to imprisonment. The need to reduce recidivism through evidence-based reintegration programmes was stressed by some speakers, as was the importance of addressing organized crime in prisons. Other speakers cautioned against relying exclusively on punitive approaches.

33. Many speakers referred to the importance of prevention programmes addressing violence against children and strengthening the protection and participation of children in order to promote a culture of lawfulness and non-violence. Programmes that fostered non-violent values and behaviour and that targeted risk factors and protective measures for young people were also mentioned in that regard.

34. The need to address firearms-related violence was mentioned by some speakers, who also recalled the need for disarmament programmes targeting firearms and ammunition. It was also necessary to implement international and regional frameworks against trafficking in firearms, and technology could play a role in promoting the efficiency of firearms traceability and registries.

35. Some speakers addressed the importance of focusing public policies on the structural causes of criminality while protecting and promoting human rights. Speakers also underscored the importance of regulating the use of force by law enforcement agents, highlighting the disproportionate and excessive use of force on persons suffering from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The need to address racism and xenophobia was also mentioned.

36. The challenges for international cooperation in the investigation of cases of child sexual abuse and trafficking in persons, which often occurred through social media networks, were also mentioned.

### **Outcome of deliberations**

37. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:

(a) Support new research, enhance partnerships with civil society, promote meaningful engagement with impacted communities and exchange knowledge and good practices between and within countries on evidence-based and data-driven crime prevention strategies;

(b) Promote approaches that take a holistic view of safety and seek to build communities where everyone is safe and has a sense of belonging and opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families can meet their needs for education, healthcare, food, housing, income and social and cultural expression, now and in the future;

(c) Promote the use of disaggregated data to support fair, inclusive and effective decision-making in the development of criminal justice responses, including crime prevention initiatives, with a view to reducing the overrepresentation of marginalized groups, people in vulnerable situations and Indigenous communities in the criminal justice system;

(d) Fund projects that address risk and protective factors among persons in vulnerable situations and reduce violence in poor communities by way of public policies that use education, culture, sports, health and socioeconomic development as mechanisms to prevent crime and promote a culture of lawfulness;

(e) Develop and make responsible use of innovative technological tools to strengthen the transparency and implementation of evidence-based strategies to prevent crime, with the objective of generating integrated and inter-agency responses that consider the variety of factors that contribute to criminal activity;

(f) Address and prevent child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation, including online and in the context of tourism, by developing awareness-raising programmes, supporting efforts to reduce the stigma associated with reporting such crimes and developing strategies to transform knowledge, attitudes and cultural practices that justify or tolerate the supply and demand for child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation material;

(g) Facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices for the prevention of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation and for the protection of and provision of assistance to victims, especially in border areas, and advance collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including private sector service providers, to remove child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation material from their platforms;

(h) Ensure that domestic legal frameworks prevent victims of trafficking in persons from being prosecuted;

(i) Address discrimination and xenophobia against migrants, including women migrants, regardless of their migratory status, and increase efforts to create regular pathways for migration as a means to prevent crime;

(j) Strengthen programmes to prevent violence against children through multisectoral policies promoting children's rights, and consider adopting differentiated approaches for children and adolescents, in line with the evolving capabilities of children and adolescents and with the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(k) Develop anti-discrimination security policies that prevent racial profiling and the disproportionate use of force against marginalized communities, ensuring that criminal justice systems afford equal protection under the law, and strengthen legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms for the use of force by law enforcement agents, in compliance with international human rights standards and incorporating accountability mechanisms while addressing racial profiling and ensuring equal protection for all communities;

(l) Support tertiary prevention aimed at the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, including within correctional institutions, and expand public-private partnerships to provide sustainable employment and social reintegration opportunities for persons in vulnerable situations;

(m) Strengthen the criminal justice response to gender-based violence, address the environments and conditions conducive to gender-based violence, create supporting environments for victims of domestic violence and their families to minimize secondary victimization when in contact with the justice system, strengthen gender-responsive criminal justice addressing the specific needs of women and promote gender parity in the criminal justice system;

(n) Strengthen the capacity of institutions responsible for combating trafficking in firearms, including by enhancing border controls, and consider using advanced technologies for registration, control and traceability, and address corruption within criminal justice systems to strengthen the trust of citizens in institutions;

(o) Strengthen the capabilities of financial intelligence units and the banking sector to identify suspicious payments and to block payments made by persons suspected of committing crimes.

**2. Promoting people-centred, inclusive and responsive criminal justice systems in a world of continuous change (agenda item 4); and ensuring equal access to justice for all: towards safe and secure societies while respecting the rule of law (workshop 2)**

38. An introductory presentation on the agenda item was delivered by a representative of the Secretariat. Statements were made by the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

39. Statements were also made by the observers for the International Legal Foundation, the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime and Housing Works.

**Summary of deliberations**

40. Speakers drew attention to barriers to people-centred justice and equal access to justice for all, including geographical, technological, economic, gender, ethnic and cultural barriers and the lack of infrastructure and trust, in particular for populations in remote areas and Indigenous Peoples.

41. Several speakers referred to the Brasilia Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People.

42. Many speakers emphasized the need to move from a solely retributive approach to crime towards a model of people-centred justice that guaranteed full respect for human rights and promoted rehabilitation as a fundamental pillar. A people-centred justice system was considered to be one whose design was guided by the needs and perspectives of individuals experiencing justice problems, taking into consideration the legal needs of diverse individuals, including those who were marginalized or in vulnerable situations.

43. It was highlighted that multisectoral and holistic approaches to access to justice, including affordable legal aid, were essential to people-centred justice in order to identify and address the root causes that may have led to contact with the criminal justice system and to provide appropriate responses. The provision of legal aid, in particular through the format of public defenders, was essential, while it also required constant strengthening and adequate resources.

44. Many speakers emphasized the need to invest in restorative justice approaches and programmes and shared their experiences, informing the Meeting of the benefits and advantages of those programmes, including as an alternative to imprisonment, within prison settings and for children and young people who were in conflict with the law.

45. Speakers stressed the importance of establishing comprehensive care for victims as an integral part of national policies on access to justice in order to reduce secondary victimization through trauma-informed and victim-centred approaches. Victim-centred criminal justice systems required specialized knowledge and skills among criminal justice professionals. Specialized courts and support units could help to provide trauma-informed services.

46. Several speakers highlighted the need to address the increase in the number of women imprisoned in the region, many of whom had a common experience of



victimization as a root cause of offending, through reforms of the legal framework and programmes addressing the needs of women offenders, in line with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). It was stressed that a gender- and human-rights perspective should be mainstreamed in the criminal justice system.

47. Several speakers reported on their experiences in increasing transparency and access to justice through the responsible use of technology as well as on measures to address corruption in the criminal justice system through oversight bodies.

48. Several examples of how to measure access to justice were shared, including monitoring how many disadvantaged people accessed legal aid services, analysing delays in justice delivery for marginalized members of society and measuring trust and satisfaction levels in the justice system.

### **Outcome of deliberations**

49. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:

(a) Promote education as a tool for social advancement and access to justice and as a way to provide opportunities beyond illegal activities;

(b) Provide adequate resources and training to practitioners and law enforcement agents to strengthen their capacities to provide victim-centred assistance, and support initiatives that take into account the specific needs of victims;

(c) Ensure the consistency of legislation and policies with international standards that address protection and assistance for victims of crime;

(d) Leverage technology to promote equal access to justice for all by advancing the modernization of judicial services, such as through virtual hearings, digital platforms for case management and the use of electronic evidence, while ensuring respect for privacy and due process;

(e) Invest in modern training programmes for criminal justice practitioners, including opportunities for distance learning and e-learning;

(f) Ensure that criminal justice systems are balancing victims' needs, the rights of accused persons and offenders and the need for an efficient and effective criminal justice system, and provide effective rights for victims of crime, including the rights to information, participation and protection and to seek restitution;

(g) Incorporate a gender perspective in criminal justice systems, including through legal reforms and by adopting alternatives to imprisonment for women, providing training to prison staff and creating mechanisms that seek to ensure equality when dispensing justice, in particular for women who suffer from gender-based violence;

(h) Ensure equal access to justice for all at each stage of the criminal justice process, guaranteeing equitable access in interactions with law enforcement agencies, prosecution offices, independent and impartial courts, the judiciary and other criminal justice institutions, as well as with legal aid providers and victim support services, including by providing holistic services to victims and accused persons from the moment of first contact with the criminal justice system;

(i) Make efforts to advance equal access to justice for all that are data-driven, evidence-based, inclusive, transparent, informed by qualitative and quantitative data and research, and developed through the wide engagement of groups and individuals with lived experience of structural inequalities and exclusion and with the participation of diverse voices in decision-making, while guaranteeing the allocation of sufficient resources for the implementation and evaluation of and further adjustments to such efforts, as necessary;

(j) Encourage law enforcement agencies and criminal justice institutions to systematically collect, analyse and disseminate data, disaggregated by factors such as race, gender and age, ensuring their accessibility in order to promote transparency and inform evidence-based policymaking, and include safeguards to ensure the protection and security of personal data that are collected and stored;

(k) Promote and support the implementation of people-centred, equity-based, gender-responsive and identity-inclusive criminal justice systems and reforms to eliminate structural and cultural barriers, ensuring fair and equal treatment for all individuals and strengthening knowledge of and trust in the criminal justice system, its institutions and the administration of justice;

(l) Address systemic racism, discrimination and poverty, which continue to impact the experiences of Afrodescendent, Indigenous and traditional communities in their contact with the criminal justice system, by adopting an intersectional approach;

(m) Review criminal laws and practices to ensure that legislation and law enforcement measures do not perpetuate structural inequalities, eliminating the criminalization of behaviours that disproportionately affect marginalized members of society, including individuals deprived of liberty owing to their inability to pay fines or fees;

(n) Give consideration to the impact of crimes that affect the environment, including on Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and examine the challenges that impact poses to ensuring access to justice for all, including the threats faced by environmental and human rights defenders;

(o) Raise awareness and provide public education by promoting campaigns on the right to equal access to justice, with a special focus on rural populations, remote communities and groups facing discrimination or language and physical barriers, ensuring that the justice system is brought closer to the people;

(p) Prevent and respond to corruption in the criminal justice system and strengthen or establish independent oversight bodies to monitor law enforcement and criminal justice practices, ensuring transparency and accountability, particularly in cases of overpolicing, detentions and the criminalization of certain members of society, as well as to monitor the treatment of victims in criminal proceedings;

(q) Promote inclusive and accessible legal aid by removing barriers and implementing diverse models to ensure quality, fair and effective legal aid, in line with the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems, at all stages of the criminal justice process, and consider establishing adequately funded free legal assistance as a public policy, in particular through the establishment and strengthening of public defenders' offices, to guarantee access to justice for all people, including poor people and other members of society;

(r) Strengthen restorative and community-based justice models that bring justice closer to communities and that are based on an understanding of local contexts;

(s) Adopt strategies to promote diversity, equality and equity within law enforcement agencies and criminal justice institutions, legal aid services and victim support services, and among legal professionals and organizations supporting the criminal justice system.

**3. Addressing and countering crime – including organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations – in new, emerging and evolving forms (agenda item 5); and getting ahead: strengthening data collection and analysis to better protect people and planet in times of new, emerging and evolving forms of crime (workshop 3)**

50. An introductory presentation was delivered on the agenda item by a representative of the Secretariat. Statements were made by the representatives of Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador,

France, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

51. A statement was made by the observer for the United Arab Emirates.

52. Statements were also made by the observers for the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Fin de la Esclavitud, the Research Centre for Feminist Action and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime.

### **Summary of deliberations**

53. Speakers recognized that organized criminal groups were constantly evolving and adapting to evade law enforcement actions. In that context, several speakers highlighted the continuing relevance of the Organized Crime Convention as the basis for combating organized crime, including in its evolving forms. Speakers mentioned several forms of crime that posed a particular challenge in the region, such as trafficking in firearms, drug and precursor trafficking, the smuggling of commercial goods, child sexual abuse and exploitation, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and corruption. Caution was urged in order to avoid automatically linking terrorism with organized crime, bearing in mind their different aims, different applicable legal frameworks and the risk of stigmatization of certain groups if those two issues were conflated.

54. The need to strengthen regional and international cooperation in criminal matters was mentioned by most speakers, who also stressed the relevance of mutual legal assistance, extradition and cross-border coordination to combat transnational organized crime, including in its emerging and evolving forms. Judicial cooperation at the regional and international levels was recognized as an effective tool, while reference was made to various regional platforms that enabled the development of regional policies against organized crime.

55. Inter-institutional cooperation at the national level was recommended, as were coordination and partnerships with civil society, academia and the private sector. Cooperation with the private sector, including through public-private partnerships, could enable the exchange of essential information related to new and emerging forms of crime. Speakers emphasized the need for coordinated action to address corruption. Some speakers expressed concern about the slow response by service providers to requests for cooperation, especially those working with instant messaging services. The establishment of digital cooperation platforms that enabled law enforcement officials to exchange information in real time during operations was mentioned as a good practice.

56. The need to strengthen the ties between law enforcement agencies and local communities was repeatedly stressed as contributing to the fight against organized crime. It was also emphasized that the protection and promotion of human rights must be an integral part of national efforts to address new and emerging forms of crime.

57. Many speakers recommended the development of capacity-strengthening programmes for law enforcement agencies and criminal justice authorities to better detect and investigate organized crime, including digital forensic training. Some recommended the establishment of regional training centres as a means to enhance national and regional capabilities to fight crime and facilitate technical cooperation. The support provided by UNODC to States in the region to build their national capacities was welcomed and further requested.

58. A number of speakers underscored the necessity to better detect and combat illicit financial flows and money-laundering by, inter alia, improving the exchange of financial intelligence across the region, noting in that respect the need to strengthen the capacity of investigators and establish dedicated units for countering illicit financial flows where needed. There was a need to counter the illicit economies generated by crimes that affect the environment, including through the creation of permanent subgroups within the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America.

59. A number of speakers acknowledged that crimes that affect the environment constituted one of the most pressing challenges facing humankind and that preventing and combating those crimes was a moral imperative to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Illegal mining and trafficking in flora, fauna, minerals, toxic waste and forestry resources were considered to exacerbate climate change, reduce biodiversity and particularly impact certain communities, such as Indigenous Peoples. It was observed that fewer than half of the countries in the world considered environmental crimes to be serious offences.

60. Reference was made to the relevance of establishing regional centres to coordinate actions, including with the support of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Although some speakers mentioned the need to expand international legal frameworks through the development of a new protocol or protocols to the Organized Crime Convention, others cautioned against the development of new instruments and encouraged more effective use of that Convention. The key role of conservation groups and environmental agencies in combating crimes that affect the environment was noted.

61. Speakers referred to the different forms of trafficking in persons that prevailed in the region, such as trafficking primarily for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labour, but also for forced begging, forced criminality and organ removal; and they stressed the need to enhance regional and transregional cooperation to fight such trafficking, including through joint task forces. There was a need to better protect and assist victims and ensure that they were not criminalized for acts they had been forced to commit. The adoption of a gender-responsive, victim-centred and trauma-informed approach to counter trafficking in persons was recommended, together with the close involvement of civil society organizations.

62. A number of speakers noted with concern that trafficking in firearms was a key regional issue that needed increased coordination among States.

63. The growing threat of cybercrime and its damaging effects, which tested the resilience of State institutions, hospitals and businesses, were referred to by several speakers. Organized crime was increasingly being committed through the use of information and communications technologies. The United Nations Convention against Cybercrime was welcomed in that regard as a tool for facilitating cooperation and the exchange of information between States, and a number of speakers reiterated the importance of implementing it while respecting human rights and the right to privacy. The emerging use of cryptocurrencies in organized crime now meant that smaller countries had to make significant investments in investigating, detecting, tracing, seizing and prosecuting crimes involving cryptocurrencies.

64. New technological solutions and tools were deemed key to tackling organized crime, for example the use of artificial intelligence and big data analysis to detect crime patterns or the use of satellites to identify illegal deforestation.

65. Many speakers affirmed the relevance of evidence-based policies and encouraged data collection and analysis to better address organized crime, while respecting the right to privacy. Specific reference was made to the need to further study femicide.

#### **Outcome of deliberations**

66. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:

(a) Strengthen international and regional cooperation among law enforcement agencies, including through the creation of liaison mechanisms to promote real-time information exchange and the reciprocal sharing of criminal records;

(b) Strengthen regional and multilateral initiatives aimed at countering organized crime, including the smuggling of commercial goods, and consider making

use of innovative technological tools, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, predictive tools and big data analysis, to disrupt smuggling networks;

(c) Acknowledge that crimes that affect the environment are a serious and growing form of transnational organized crime, and call upon States to actively engage in the work of the open-ended intergovernmental expert group established pursuant to resolution 12/4 of the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention;

(d) Ensure coordination among relevant national authorities, including financial intelligence units and anti-money-laundering authorities, to help guarantee that the proceeds of crime are not retained by criminals;

(e) Establish crimes that affect the environment as predicate offences of the crime of money-laundering, enhance financial investigations, seize and confiscate assets derived from those crimes, and use such proceeds to repair the damage caused to the environment and to victims;

(f) Create regional networks for countering crimes that affect the environment aimed at tracing and disrupting trafficking in natural resources and promoting the exchange of information and awareness-raising, in particular regarding work carried out with local communities;

(g) Strengthen the capacities of law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and the judiciary to prevent, disrupt, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cybercrime and to handle and understand digital evidence, and establish specialized cybercrime units where needed;

(h) Respect and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to privacy, while preventing and countering crime, including cybercrime;

(i) Strengthen partnerships with the private sector, local governments, civil society and other relevant stakeholders as a means to better prevent and combat new and emerging forms of crime;

(j) Develop mechanisms and platforms to support the exchange in real time of evidence and intelligence during operations related to organized crime;

(k) Create joint task forces to better investigate and prosecute trafficking in persons;

(l) Strengthen the collection and analysis of disaggregated criminal justice data, by geographical location, identity, race and socioeconomic group, and collaborate with partners and stakeholders to better understand the treatment and overrepresentation of marginalized persons in the criminal justice system.

**4. 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 (agenda item 6); and turning the digital age into an opportunity: promoting the responsible use of technologies in crime prevention and criminal justice (workshop 4)**

67. An introductory presentation on the agenda item was delivered by a representative of the Secretariat. Statements were made by the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Peru and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

68. A statement was also made by the observer for the United Arab Emirates.

69. Statements were also made by the observers for the Panamerican Institute of Law and Technology and the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

**Summary of deliberations**

70. During the discussions, it was mentioned that the strengthening of international legal cooperation was essential to address all forms of organized crime, especially considering that some countries faced challenges in obtaining responses to requests for such cooperation. Some speakers called for the development of standards for the exchange of electronic evidence with a view to ensuring the admittance of such evidence in legal proceedings at the domestic level. In addition, speakers noted that the international crime conventions supported the prevention, detection and prosecution of different forms of crime at the national level. The need to strengthen cooperation in asset seizure and confiscation was essential to deprive organized criminal groups of the proceeds of crime and as an important tool in combating organized crime.

71. Some speakers expressed regret that organized criminal groups were continuously improving their capacities while Governments struggled to catch up and dismantle such groups. The use of artificial intelligence for criminal purposes, including generative artificial intelligence, was an example of the capacity of organized criminal groups to adapt and incorporate new and emerging technologies in their modus operandi. The development of national strategies to counter organized crime was mentioned as an important tool for States to promote cooperation at the domestic and international levels.

72. Speakers emphasized the need to provide Governments, in particular law enforcement agencies with adequate normative frameworks and technological tools to help them to dismantle organized criminal groups in the digital age. The importance of continuous technical assistance and capacity-building, the exchange of information and good practices, and adequate and sustainable funding were seen as essential to promote the resilience of criminal justice systems in the digital age. Furthermore, many speakers mentioned that continuous learning opportunities were important to ensure that criminal justice practitioners were up to date with the ever-evolving landscape of digital technologies.

73. Speakers acknowledged that digital technologies could generate numerous positive effects for criminal justice systems, such as by reducing court workloads, employing predictive policing through artificial intelligence and widening access to justice. The use of artificial intelligence to support financial investigations was proving particularly beneficial for the analysis of vast quantities of data. However, speakers also noted that the employment of technology alone was not sufficient and that there was a growing need for interoperable, transparent and integrated systems to leverage the benefits of technology for criminal justice systems.

74. Many speakers underscored the need to strengthen safeguards in conjunction with the application of technologies in criminal justice systems in order to ensure data protection, privacy rights and due process. The incorporation of safety, human rights, “do no harm” and oversight mechanisms into the design of digital technologies was particularly important to balance the benefits and potential negative effects of employing such technologies in criminal justice systems. Many speakers highlighted the need to create normative frameworks to establish safeguards, especially by holding Governments and other stakeholders accountable for potential human rights violations, and to ensure fairness in the use of digital technologies. Some speakers were concerned about racial and gender biases in artificial intelligence systems.

75. In that regard, promoting partnerships among States at the national and international levels was also mentioned, as was the central role of the multilateral system in promoting cooperation to address the complex challenges of crime prevention and criminal justice in the digital age. Some speakers addressed the need to promote partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders to improve the functioning of criminal justice systems. A number of speakers stressed that the participation of civil society in crime prevention and criminal justice activities and service delivery could further the rule of law, as well as the promotion and protection of human rights in the criminal justice system.

**Outcome of deliberations**

76. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:

(a) Strengthen mechanisms for international legal cooperation, including mutual legal assistance, extradition and the seizure, confiscation and recovery of assets, as well as mechanisms for the exchange of financial intelligence between States;

(b) Develop unified protocols on the collection, handling and standardization of digital evidence, and consider establishing a regional technological innovation centre for criminal investigation and analysis;

(c) Encourage and support national inter-agency coordination in crime prevention and criminal justice responses, encourage coordination and partnerships between donors and beneficiary States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector when providing technical and material assistance, and reaffirm the important role of UNODC in this regard;

(d) Implement continuous learning and education programmes for crime prevention and criminal justice practitioners, promote sustainable capacity-building to enhance international responses to crime, and strengthen civil society engagement in community, national and international capacity-building, particularly as it pertains to protecting human rights, promoting gender equality and ensuring transparency and the rule of law;

(e) Develop innovative approaches for crime prevention through the use of digital technologies, implement media and information literacy curricula for children and young people as a primary prevention measure, and leverage artificial intelligence to make children safer;

(f) Foster the development of people-centred, interoperable and integrated technological tools, including artificial intelligence, and ensure that different systems work together to deliver services in criminal justice systems; and create normative frameworks for the responsible, inclusive and ethical use of digital technologies, including safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems, and regularly update these frameworks to address the ever-changing nature of digital technologies;

(g) Promote measures to increase the efficiency of and access to legal services that foster inclusive and equitable access to justice, including through the responsible use of technology, and ensure that the deployment of technology, including artificial intelligence, complies with the principles of legality, proportionality, necessity, accountability and non-discrimination and incorporates the protection and promotion of safety, privacy and human rights into the measures' design;

(h) Develop accountability mechanisms for the use of digital technologies in criminal justice systems while protecting judicial independence, conduct regular reviews that include consultations with diverse stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness and accuracy of such technologies and their compliance with the principle of "do no harm", considering the potential risk of such technologies to exacerbate existing biases and discrimination; and foster the efficiency, adaptability, accessibility and interoperability of digital technologies to deliver services in criminal justice systems in a manner that integrates the work of relevant government institutions, including the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, such as in case file management systems.

### **III. Attendance and organization of work**

#### **A. Date and venue of the Meeting**

77. The Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was held in San José from 4 to 6 February 2025.

#### **B. Attendance**

78. The following States members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean were represented at the Meeting: Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay.

79. Luxembourg, the Russian Federation, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam were represented by observers.

80. The following entities of the United Nations system were represented by observers: UNODC and United Nations Development Programme.

81. The following institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network were represented by observers: Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, and International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy.

82. The following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council were represented by observers: Asistencia Legal por los Derechos Humanos, Association for the Prevention of Torture, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Committee of Trinidad and Tobago, Fin de la Esclavitud, Fundación Ciudadanía y Desarrollo, Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, Housing Works, Instituto Brasileiro de Direitos Humanos, the Panamerican Institute of Law and Technology, International Legal Foundation, Research Centre for Feminist Action and Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

#### **C. Opening of the Meeting**

83. The Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was opened on 4 February 2025 by the Secretary of the Meeting.

84. The Minister of Justice of Costa Rica emphasized the importance of finding urgent, sustainable and innovative solutions to achieve peaceful societies. He highlighted the need for evidence-based strategies in crime prevention and criminal justice and for promoting a culture of lawfulness, combating corruption and increasing the credibility of public institutions and justice systems.

85. The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica referred to the Congress as an opportunity for the international community to find strategies for addressing crime-related challenges, including those related to climate change, and for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He emphasized the need to incorporate a gender perspective and adopt human rights-based approaches in crime prevention strategies.

86. The Chair of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its thirty-fourth session, in a video message, stressed the importance of regional preparatory meetings in identifying regional priorities and proposing concrete



recommendations, which would contribute to the drafting of the Abu Dhabi declaration.

87. The Executive Director of UNODC, in a video message, emphasized that the Fifteenth Congress would address some of the most pressing current challenges, such as new and evolving forms of crime, equal access to justice for all and the responsible use of technology.

88. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Costa Rica, noting that transnational organized crime fuelled violence around the world, stressed the importance of multilateral cooperation to face that challenge, as well as the importance of justice systems that prioritized rehabilitation and reintegration and of human-rights compliant frameworks to address cybercrime.

89. The Director of the International Police Representation Department of the United Arab Emirates, representing the host country of the Fifteenth Congress, highlighted linkages between different types of crime and financial crimes and referred to the needs to protect vulnerable members of society, to leverage technology to combat crime and to safeguard people and the planet against crimes that affect the environment.

90. A youth representative of the Generation Justice (GenJust) initiative, which was aimed at promoting youth engagement in the lead-up to and at the Fifteenth Congress, shared key recommendations from the GenJust Latin America and the Caribbean regional youth consultation in a video message (see A/CONF.241/RPM.2/CRP.2).

#### **D. Election of officers**

91. At its 1st meeting, on 4 February 2025, the Meeting elected, by acclamation, the following officers:

*Chair:* Gerald Campos Valverde (Costa Rica)

*Vice-Chair:* Erin Leslie McKey (Canada)

*Rapporteur:* Rodrigo Bertoglio Cardoso (Brazil)

#### **E. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work**

92. Also at its 1st meeting, the Meeting adopted its provisional agenda (A/CONF.241/RPM.2/1), which read as follows:

1. Opening of the Meeting.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. Main theme of the Fifteenth Congress: “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”.
5. Substantive items on the agenda and the topics of the workshops of the Fifteenth Congress:
  - (a) Advancing innovative and evidence-based crime prevention strategies towards social, economic and environmental development (agenda item 3); and building resilient societies, with a focus on protecting women, children and youth: fostering engagement, education and the culture of lawfulness (workshop 1);
  - (b) Promoting people-centred, inclusive and responsive criminal justice systems in a world of continuous change (agenda item 4); and

ensuring equal access to justice for all: towards safe and secure societies while respecting the rule of law (workshop 2);

- (c) Addressing and countering crime – including organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations – in new, emerging and evolving forms (agenda item 5); and getting ahead: strengthening data collection and analysis to better protect people and planet in times of new, emerging and evolving forms of crime (workshop 3);
- (d) 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 (agenda item 6); and turning the digital age into an opportunity: promoting the responsible use of technologies in crime prevention and criminal justice (workshop 4).

6. Recommendations for the Fifteenth Congress.

7. Adoption of the report on the Meeting.

93. At the same meeting, the Meeting approved its organization of work. The list of documents before the Meeting is contained in the annex to the present report.

#### **Proceedings**

94. The 1st and 2nd meetings, on 4 February, were chaired by Gerald Campos Valverde (Costa Rica); the 3rd and 4th meetings, on 5 February, were chaired by Erin McKey (Canada); and discussions during the 5th meeting, on 6 February, were facilitated by Douglas Durán (Director of the Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders), on behalf of Gerald Campos Valverde (Costa Rica). Gerald Campos Valverde (Costa Rica) opened the 5th meeting, and Erin McKey (Canada) closed the 5th and last meeting.

## **IV. Adoption of the report and closure of the Meeting**

95. At its 5th meeting, on 6 February 2025, the Meeting considered and adopted its report ([A/CONF.241/RPM.2/L.1](#), [A/CONF.241/RPM.2/L.1/Add.1](#), [A/CONF.241/RPM.2/L.1/Add.2](#), [A/CONF.241/RPM.2/L.1/Add.3](#), [A/CONF.241/RPM.2/L.1/Add.4](#) and [A/CONF.241/RPM.2/L.1/Add.5](#)), as orally amended.

## Annex

### List of documents

<a href="#">A/CONF.241/PM.1</a>	Discussion guide
<a href="#">A/CONF.241/RPM.2/1</a>	Annotated provisional agenda
<a href="#">A/CONF.241/RPM.2/L.1</a> and Add.1–5	Draft report
<a href="#">A/CONF.241/RPM.2/INF.2</a>	List of participants
A/CONF.241/PM/CRP.1	Conference room paper entitled “Chair’s summaries on the 2021 to 2024 thematic discussions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration”
A/CONF.241/PM/CRP.2	Conference room paper submitted by Brazil and Canada entitled “Recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Equal Access to Justice for All, held in Brasilia, Brazil, from 9 to 11 December 2024”
A/CONF.241/RPM.2/CRP.1	Conference room paper submitted by the Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders entitled “Reporte de la Reunión Consultiva Regional de América Latina y el Caribe para avanzar en la aplicación de las Reglas de las Naciones Unidas para el tratamiento de las reclusas y medidas no privativas de la libertad para las mujeres delincuentes (Reglas de Bangkok), realizada en San José, Costa Rica, del 25 al 27 de noviembre de 2024”
A/CONF.241/RPM.2/CRP.2	Conference room paper submitted by the UNODC Generation Justice initiative entitled “Recommendations from the Generation Justice youth consultation in Latin America and the Caribbean”