



General Assembly

Distr.: Limited
6 February 2025

English only

Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

San José, 4–6 February 2025

Draft report

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Addendum

II. Recommendations (*continued*)

B. Substantive items and workshops – Agenda item 5 (d)

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)

1. An introductory presentation was delivered by a representative of the Secretariat introducing the agenda item. Statements were made by the representatives of Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Colombia, Canada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Peru, Panama and Honduras. Statements were also made by the observer for the United Arab Emirates. Statements were also made by the observers for IPANDETEC, and the Alliance of NGOs for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Summary of deliberations

2. During the debate on agenda item 6 and workshop 4 of the Congress, it was mentioned that the strengthening of international legal cooperation is essential to address all forms of organized crime, especially considering that some countries face challenges in obtaining responses to such requests. Some speakers called for the development of standards for the exchange of electronic evidence and ensuring their admittance in legal proceedings at the domestic level. In addition, speakers noted that the international crime conventions support 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 mentioned as essential to deprive organized criminal groups of the proceeds of crime and as an important tool in combating organized crime.



3. Some speakers regretted that organized criminal groups are continuously improving their capacities while governments struggle to catch up and dismantle such groups. The use of artificial intelligence for criminal purposes, including generative artificial intelligence, was mentioned as 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 against organized crime was mentioned as an important tool for Member States to promote cooperation at the domestic and international levels.
4. Speakers emphasized the need to provide governments, especially law enforcement, with adequate normative frameworks and technological tools to help them dismantle organized criminal groups in the digital age. The importance of continuous technical assistance and capacity-building, exchange of information and good practices, as well as adequate and sustainable funding, were mentioned as essential to promote the resilience of criminal justice systems in the digital age. Furthermore, many speakers mentioned that continuous learning opportunities are important to ensure criminal justice practitioners are up to date with the ever-evolving landscape of digital technologies.
5. Speakers acknowledged that digital technologies could generate numerous positive effects for criminal justice systems, such as the reduction of court workloads, the employment of predictive policing through artificial intelligence, as well as widening access to justice. The use of artificial intelligence to support financial investigations was mentioned, proving particularly beneficial for the analyses of vast quantities of data. Speakers also noted that the employment of technology alone is not sufficient, and explained that there is a growing need for interoperable, transparent, and integrated systems to leverage their benefits for criminal justice systems.
6. Many speakers underscored the need to strengthen safeguards for the application of technologies in criminal justice systems, giving particular emphasis to the protection of privacy. The incorporation of safety, human rights, do-no-harm, and oversight mechanisms into the design of digital technologies was mentioned as particularly important to balance the benefits and potential negative effects of employing such technologies in criminal justice systems. Many speakers mentioned the need to create normative frameworks to establish safeguards, especially in holding government and other stakeholders accountable for potential human rights violations, and to ensure fairness in the use of digital technologies. Some speakers were concerned with racial and gender biases in artificial intelligence systems.
7. Promoting partnerships among Member States at the national and international levels was also mentioned in that regard, as well as 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 can further the rule of law, as well as the promotion and protection of human rights in the criminal justice system.

Outcome of deliberations

8. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:
 - (a) Strengthen mechanisms for international legal cooperation, including mutual legal assistance, extradition, the seizure, confiscation, and recovery of assets, as well as mechanisms for exchange of financial intelligence between States;
 - (b) Develop unified protocols on the collection, handling, and standardization of digital evidence, consider the creation of 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, as well as 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 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in this regard;

(d) Implement continuous learning and education programmes for crime prevention and criminal justice practitioners, promote sustainable capacity-building to increase international responses to crime, as well as 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 with the use of digital technologies, implement media and information literacy curricula for children and youth 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, ensuring that different systems work together to deliver services in criminal justice systems; as well as 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, as well as ensure that any responsible 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 their design; and

(h) Develop accountability mechanisms for the use of digital technologies in criminal justice systems, conduct regular reviews that include consultations with diverse stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness, accuracy, compliance with the principle of do no harm, considering the potential risks of such technologies to exacerbate existing biases and discrimination; as well as 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, such as case file management systems.
