

## **Recommendations brought to the attention of the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Kyoto Congress) by its Youth Forum**

### **Kyoto Congress Youth Forum Statement**

**Kyoto, 27-28 February 2021**

We, representing young people from around the world, participated in the Youth Forum for the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Kyoto Congress Youth Forum) held from 27 to 28 February 2021 in Kyoto, Japan, and gathered to share our views, add our voice, and make recommendations for action to be brought to the attention of the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice;

Considering the overall theme of the Youth Forum, “Youth engagement for our safe and secure society: towards achieving the SDGs”; and convinced that, on the one hand, crime is an impediment to sustainable development and, on the other, sustainable development is an enabling factor for safe and secure society, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era and in view of 2030 as a benchmark for the accomplishment of the Agenda for Sustainable Development; discussed three thematic sub-topics, corresponding to the agenda items of the Kyoto Congress, as follows: “Youth engagement in preventing youth crime and reintegrating youth offenders”, “Youth education for fostering a culture of lawfulness” and “Youth commitment towards a safe information society”;

Being proud of and valuing a cultural diversity that provides wider perspectives and viewpoints, and appreciating the joint efforts to formulate solutions despite the differences in views and opinions, with the intention of making the world safer and without crime;

Determined to join our voices in efforts to strive for a better world and asserting our role for building a better and brighter future, and therefore determined to provide innovative and novel solutions and take action;

Emphasizing our wish for all stakeholders participating in the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to consider our recommendations;

We recommend the following to the Kyoto Congress for its consideration:

## **Recommendations**

### **Youth engagement in preventing youth crime and reintegrating youth offenders**

#### **Actors in society**

1. In developing and implementing crime prevention and social reintegration strategies for youth, we recommend that governments should endeavour to strengthen partnerships, by involving and coordinating with relevant sectors, local governmental units and various actors in society, including family members, traditional leaders in the communities as well as community stakeholders, such as schools, counsellors for both youth and parents, welfare services, non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations. In this regard, the good practice of VPOs (Volunteer Probation Officers) and BBS (Big Brothers and Sisters) can be taken into account, as well as experiences with creating a safe space for youth engagement, such as places for children and youth to constructively spend after-school hours, especially those who are most vulnerable to criminal activities and have limited access to basic needs, resources and opportunities.

#### **Rehabilitative measures**

2. We recommend governments to make best efforts to apply rehabilitative measures in correctional and other facilities as well as for treatment in the community, which will facilitate social reintegration of youth offenders, taking into account the needs to build bonds with others. In addition, opportunities for ethical education, higher education, including scholarship opportunities with educational institutions (school and universities), cultural exchange programmes, training on empathetic skills, vocational training including apprentice and internships for manual labour and tasks, familiarization with information and communications technologies (ICT) should be provided. Also, programmes using virtual reality to simulate common situation that youth in facilities would experience outside, programmes focusing on mental health, emotional therapy such as “puppy training program” and other therapeutic and social activities including sports, arts and music, as well as capacitating them to participate in community-based services and supporting their employment and relocation of residence as necessary.

#### **Preventing and removing stigmatization**

3. We recommend governments to take measures to address, prevent and address stigmatization of children and youth in conflict with law, bearing in mind the concept of “leaving no one behind”, by treating them equally as other citizens, protecting their privacy and addressing their special needs (health, educational, personality development, family and peer network support) and consider measures to publicise the success stories of social reintegration like the “yellow-ribbon project” and experiences of the ex-offenders and to promote their volunteer activities and individual growth and progress in the community so that they emerge as productive citizens.

4. We recommend governments to identify and proactively work with young role models who can strengthen the message of youth reintegration and provide positive examples of transformation concerning youth in conflict with law, to community members.

#### **Awareness-raising for the integration of offenders**

5. Recognizing that the community should understand the importance of accepting youth in conflict with law without prejudice or discrimination and should not consider cases involving youth distant from their own realities. We recommend that both national and local governments should

collaborate with the private sector to raise awareness for the integration of youth in conflict with law including by grass-roots campaign and campaigns that promote volunteering by youth offenders, as well as awareness raising around the concept of restorative justice.

6. We recommend governments to consider legal reforms that reinforce the use of prisons as a measure of last resort for youth, seek alternatives that redirect at-risk youth to community-based treatment such as probation and establish methods of negotiation on the procedure.

7. We recommend governments to strengthen legal and other reforms to prevent and address potential negative labelling of youth in conflict with law and humanise their experiences for their community acceptance.

### **COVID-19 response**

8. Recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on traditional community activities, we recommend actors in crime prevention and social reintegration strategies to consider taking advantage of newly developed tools such as ICT, social media and web conference system, which provide opportunities for vulnerable youth, isolated from society, being abused or sexually exploited, to seek help as well as for those who feel more comfortable using those tools, bearing in mind that there should be somewhere who are not able to access technologies due to poverty, which is a new challenge to our humanities.

9. We recommend governments to take into special consideration the needs of youth in custodial care who are unable to access basic needs of physical, mental and psychological help and support, family contact and legal aid, due to lockdown conditions and suspended access to these institutions by outside organisations.

### **Programmes on prevention of crime and reoffending**

10. We recommend UNODC, intergovernmental organizations, academic institutes and other organizations to examine effective crime and reoffending prevention measures addressing the specific needs of young offenders and at-risk youth based on the opinion and idea of the young generation and understanding the interest and demands of the youth, such as (a) interaction programme free of charge where children and youth can learn about others; (b) social adaption programme involving teenagers; (c) ICT training programme; (d) brainstorming platform or session to enhance understanding of the rule of law; (e) podcast programme for sharing experience and awareness raising, and for enabling to connect with others; (f) mentorship programme such as “tomodachi activities” of BBS; (g) evaluation programmes which enhances youth’s self-confidence; (h) oversight programme to evaluate policies of different countries; (i) “children’s cafeteria” which offer free or inexpensive meals; (j) collecting statistics on social programme; and (k) the regular organization of youth forum and similar international exchanges of perspectives of youth on crime prevention and criminal justice and other channels.

### **Youth education for fostering a culture of lawfulness**

#### **Strengthen education about the rule of law**

11. Recognizing that poor or the lack of focus on education about the rule of law in school curricula might lead to youth being unaware about their rights and duties, and thus failing to understand the practical aspects of access to justice,

We recommend that a curriculum must be designed for all educational systems to enhance learning on the rule of law. Similarly, subjects on criminal justice shall be promoted, both in theoretical and practical aspects.

We recommend to promote initiatives that bring rule of law practitioners to the classrooms and strengthen the “learning by doing” approach, which helps students to familiarise themselves with the court and judicial systems, prosecutors, forensic services, defence attorneys, etc.

We recommend that students experience related processes, as through mock court trials and visits to the rule of law institutions.

12. Observing that the education about the rule of law and a culture of lawfulness is left up to educators at school and not greatly discussed at other platforms or discussions,

We recommend that education must be taken as a shared responsibility of educators (secondary level of education), families (primary level of education), social associations (tertiary), as well as other institutions. All these stakeholders should be connected and work together to produce comprehensive guidelines which are easy to understand and comprehend by the youth. This can be done by using the collected documents of previously produced guidelines, based on which we can build new ones. We promote a more comprehensive approach.

We recommend that youth shall act as the catalyst for change and be the starting engine of this process, encouraging teachers and other notable individuals to change negative behaviours, acquire knowledge and to become better-informed citizens. The development of student-led programmes to promote the rule of law education to lower grades (or from university to high school), as well as peer-to-peer activities, are examples of how to integrate students and teachers towards the rule of law;

We encourage young people especially to drive campaigns to raise awareness, especially in remote areas and rural areas, to explain and sensitize the general public on the rule of law and their rights.

We recommend that educational institutions engage public authorities in the rule of law education programmes as well as in learning about their work to promote the rule of law;

We recommend that non-traditional strategies to teach youth about the rule of law shall be encouraged, such as role-play activities, sports, theatre, amongst others. Models United Nations (MUN) play an important role in encouraging youth to develop innovative solutions to global challenges and the rule of law.

### **Accessibility of the law**

13. Recognizing that the language of the law is complicated and often hard to understand, and noting with concern the impact of insufficient or poor social awareness and social knowledge regarding citizen’s rights and duties to the establishment of the rule of law,

We recommend the translation of the law in a more accessible language for all, this will draw interest to read and understand the law, but most importantly, it will make the rule of law accessible to all, even to those who are in remote areas or do not have a high level of education.

14. Taking into account the fact that ICTs can increase transparency, enhance accountability and build trust within countries, as well as ensure no one is left behind,

We recommend the use of information and communication technologies to make the law more accessible to the population.

### **Mass media and social media**

15. Taking into consideration that mass media and social media can be called a double-edged sword which is equally capable of spreading misinformation as it is to spread correct and just facts, pop-culture and mass media tend to glamourise individuals who reap their gains without following the rule of law, and subtly overlook the people who do follow it and make the process look more cumbersome, and that this leads to biased opinions and people being misled and encouraged to break the law,

We recommend promoting the correct use of these platforms to spread correct and just information. This can be done by promoting media literacy which allows people to evaluate media content and understand the broader media ecosystem. This can be done in ways such as but not limited to; (a) Embedding media literacy in the school curriculum; (b) Supporting educators with training and resources; (c) Incentivising media activism and (d) Promoting government-funded media campaigns.

We recommend the regulation of both social and mass media to have certain standards and to be accountable for what they chose to broadcast.

### **Public trust, strong institutions and accountability**

16. Taking into account that the lack of trust in the judicial systems of a country might lead to civil disobedience and a potential escalation into violence and its consequences in a country's social, economic and political level, and recognizing that public institutions should lead by example,

We recommend that transparency and accountability shall be identified as a bedrock condition to society, and that governments shall ensure the neutrality of decision-making processes and the equal representation of minorities.

We also recommend proactive and people-oriented actions to restore the principles of democracy, such as the importance of representation, as the means to rebuild trust in public institutions as capable of solving local challenges.

We recommend the creation and strengthening of environments for students and young people to participate in rule-making processes, thus engaging in democratic processes and finding innovative solutions to local challenges that undermine public trust and the rule of law.

We recommend that governments expand youth forums on rule of law issues, including through the organization of a regular youth forum during the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. We also encourage intergenerational dialogue to foster an exchange of experiences, ideas and recommendations.

We recommend trials to be public and be accessible to the youth so that they can understand the proceedings and language of the court.

17. Noting with concern the world's problem of corruption the necessity to tackle it through a two-fold effort that includes both citizens government officials to refrain from the practices of bribery, abuse of functions, obstruction of justice and other acts which take away the essence of rule-based, effective, accountable and impartial institutions,

We recommend that multidimensional approaches to promote the culture of lawfulness shall be encouraged into society, thus reshaping the perspective that lawfulness relies on legal and political realms, but rather in all aspects of life. Awareness-raising strategies to strengthen would be appreciated.

18. Recognizing the fragility of institutions the poor implementation of separation of power,

We urge the executive, legislature and judiciary system to work in an independent manner, that the executive system neither interferes in the matter of justice nor the parliament; this will not only foster trust within the society, but will also enhance transparency and proper use of the law, which will encourage the culture of lawfulness.

### **Discrimination and social cohesion**

19. Observing the impacts of inequality and discrimination that undermine the balance of power and representation of vulnerable and at-risk young groups in decision-making processes as corrosive practices that threaten the achievement of the rule of law,

20. Recognizing that the major challenges of applying the rule of law are related to poverty, inequalities and lack of opportunities, which lead to corruption and affect hugely the way people perceive the law,

We need to strengthen communities by addressing social exclusion and promoting community cohesion. It is, therefore, crucial to identify the root causes that lead to discrimination against youth, as well as youth engagement in criminal activities.

We recommend that there is a fair share of opportunities within different classes of society.

We recommend that public institutions work towards achieving internal equality and non-discrimination, ensuring that gender and other relevant gaps (such as those related to minorities) are eliminated so that public institutions practice what they preach.

21. Recalling the impacts of organized crime at the societal level and the impact of organized criminal organizations in promoting youth attractiveness to crime and violence,

We recommend the development of youth-oriented public policies and social interventions that address the root causes and the favourable environment to youth engagement and remittance to crime, which include at-school- and family-based programmes.

We recommend wider attention to youth inclusion in job markets and better communication regarding career opportunities as effective means to reduce the attractiveness of crime and the engagement of youth into criminal organizations.

22. Recognizing the lack of gender equality in the judiciary system, which leads to a lack of representation and biases in the judiciary system,

We recommend that the minister of justice, in conjunction with the minister of education, support women who want to pursue a career in the judiciary system through grants and scholarships. This will encourage women to become persecutors and law enforcement officials, which will lead to trust within society. We also encourage the different courts to have gender balance and make sure all backgrounds are represented within justice.

## **Social reintegration programs**

23. Noting with concern the lack of social reintegration programmes which provide offenders with assistance and supervision that they may need to successfully desist from crime, reintegrate into society and prevent relapse into criminal behaviour,

We recommend that former criminals and offenders should be given space to talk about their story, their reasoning for stopping their criminal acts and how they properly reinserted themselves into society. This can have a huge impact on the youth as it would help them relate to the issue, empathise with them and stop them from romanticizing the idea of the "bad guy" as the hero. This also allows the criminal to feel like they have a space in society that they can be heard.

We recommend the better implementation of the United Nations standard minimum rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) which promote meaningful rehabilitation programmes which aim to reduce recidivism and improve public safety and prevent the criminals from getting caught up in the vicious cycle of failed social reintegration, reoffending, reconviction and social rejection.

## **Youth commitment towards a safe information society**

### **Prevention**

24. We strongly call for the establishment of joint educational initiatives for raising awareness about the impact of, and challenges posed by, the criminal misuse of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

25. We support preventive measures, including at the community level, to prevent crimes facilitated by the use of ICTs and the victimization of young people, in particular, by such crimes and to secure a safe online environment for them.

26. We highlight the need for further exploring the impact of regulatory and innovative tools to address harms from content and conduct online, including certain forms of filtering that involve Internet service providers blocking access to certain URLs (website addresses). In general, we favour more efforts to strike a balance between State regulatory measures and self-regulation of the private sector entities for ensuring online safety and preventing victimization in the online environment.

27. We also recommend considering the cultural specificities and the varying levels of capacities and access to ICTs in developed and developing countries when assessing emerging technologies and technological innovations as "safety nets" in the use of ICTs.

28. We stress the importance of such concepts and initiatives as the Safety by Design (SbD) that encourages organizations and private sector entities to put user safety and rights in the product development lifecycle and at the centre of the design, development and release of online products and services. In this regard, we emphasize the added value of SbD as being proactive, focused on culture

and leadership, emphasizing accountability and embedding a “culture of safety” into the product/service design, development and release formore positive and rewarding use of ICTs .

29. We stress the pivotal role of educational systems in empowering young people, developing their skills on how to “safely navigate online” and nurturing a culture of continuous learning and critical thinking among young people as a prerequisite to prevent their victimization by the criminal misuse of ICTs, and especially the victimization of young women who are disproportionately exposed to various forms of online abuse in various parts of the world; we also stress the need for educational materials tailor-made to the respective age level, from basic awareness-raising at early stages to “technology curricula” at later stages of the educational process.

30. We acknowledge the problem of decreased parental supervision, also due to financial difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which considerably increases children’s vulnerabilities; and we further stress the importance of also educating parents, carers and guardians to ensure that children and young people use Internet sites safely and responsibly.

### **Legal responses and domestic measures, including for the protection of victims**

31. We recommend that governments take all the necessary steps to put in place or revise, as appropriate, laws and regulations to ensure the effective prevention, investigation and prosecution of ICT-facilitated crimes, including, among others, online child sexual exploitation and image-based abuse, online recruitment for terrorist purposes, identity theft, cybercrime acts targeting children, hate crimes and online gambling, with due consideration to the rights of the victims. In doing so, attention should be devoted to clear definitions and concrete terminologies for delineating the scope of appropriate legal responses and addressing loopholes and gaps, in accordance with the principle of legality.

32. We alert with grave concern on the irreversible impact of such conducts as cyberbullying, cyber harassment and cyberstalking on the mental health of children even in cases where such conducts do not qualify as cybercrime acts, and we recommend that appropriate responses to such conducts, including online counselling and educational and empowering measures, be delivered in a timely manner and utilizing multi-disciplinary and culturally specific approaches involving various stakeholders active in this field.

33. We further recommend that governments implement policies and share best practices, including on support programmes for victims and for the rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders, as well as the mainstreaming of a gender perspective, in order to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse and specifically address the problem of disproportionate exposure of young women and girls to online abuse and harassment.

### **Law enforcement**

34. We recognize the negative impact of using artificial intelligence (AI) for malicious purposes, especially for the generation of fake videos and images (“deepfakes”) with a high potential to manipulate or deceive; but we also stress that with an accumulated understanding of their application, new technologies such as AI can be a powerful resource for law enforcement.

35. We strongly favour the creation of specialized units within law enforcement authorities to deal with ICT-facilitated crimes and the use of technological innovations by such authorities in the fight against those crimes with due regard to ethical considerations. We strongly believe that caution is needed in the specific application of technology-based tools for addressing crime-related threats to ensure their responsible use and avoid unintended consequences. This is particularly important given

that many of the present and future technologies may have serious implications for personal privacy and civil liberties.

### **International cooperation**

36. We acknowledge the transnational nature of ICT-facilitated crimes and therefore we support more streamlined measures and policies to promote international cooperation to combat such crimes and bring offenders to justice, based on existing and future international instruments, as appropriate. We also support initiatives to foster cooperation among countries to exchange expertise, experiences and good practices on the safe use of ICTs, especially by young people.

### **Public-private partnerships**

37. Recognizing that the rapid growth of the Internet and ICTs has enabled economic growth and broad access to vital services but has also created new opportunities for criminal activities, we call upon governments to encourage and promote public-private partnerships to address the challenges posed by the criminal misuse of ICTs. In the same direction, we also urge Internet service providers, social networking companies and other private sector entities to be actively involved in the fight against such challenges, especially through reporting suspicious behaviour to competent investigative authorities.

### **Capacity-building**

38. We encourage States and other stakeholders from the private sector to provide funding on a consistent and sustainable basis for capacity-building to support national and regional efforts to prevent and combat crimes facilitated by the use of ICTs, paying particular attention to emerging challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic that may have a lasting impact on crime prevention and criminal justice responses to address related threats.

39. We emphasize the importance of training and capacity building for authorities involved in the investigation and prosecution of ICT-facilitated crimes and we strongly favour the involvement of UNODC and other stakeholders with a view to offering expertise and guidance tools in related training activities at both national and regional levels.

40. We urge UNODC to work jointly with governments in considering the appointment of “youth ambassadors” and “youth advocates for change” from different Member States who can participate in youth forums organized in different countries, as well as in crime prevention and criminal justice initiatives or technical assistance projects particularly relating to the fight against ICT-facilitated crimes.