

14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Crime Congress)

High Level Segment

National Statement by Mrs Josephine Teo,
Minister for Manpower & Second Minister for Home Affairs

8 March 2021 (0800 – 1000 hours)

Thank you, Mr Chair.

2. Singapore would like to express our gratitude to Japan for hosting the Crime Congress under the present challenging circumstances, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. We appreciate Japan's Permanent Representative in Vienna Ambassador Takeshi Hikihara and his team for leading the discussions on the Kyoto Declaration. Singapore supports the Kyoto Declaration, which will guide global efforts in combating transnational organised crime for the next five years.

Singapore's Approach to Crime Prevention

4. Singapore's approach to tackling crime is underpinned by our strong emphasis on the rule of law, criminal justice measures and effective implementation of crime prevention policies.
5. Singapore has a robust criminal justice system, with tough laws against crime, highly professional law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies, as well as an independent and effective judiciary.
6. We continue to improve our capabilities in the fight against crime and have invested heavily in technology to enable law enforcement.
7. In November 2020, we established a new Science and Technology agency called HTX with more than 1,300 scientists and engineers who are working on technology solutions to support our law enforcement and security agencies.

8. We have also strengthened our legal frameworks. To this end, we have introduced stronger criminal laws and better protection for the vulnerable, such as the Criminal Law Reform Bill introduced in 2019. The Bill strengthened our laws targeting sexual offences against minors; provided stronger protection for vulnerable victims; and updated the Penal Code to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. These changes have allowed us to deal with emerging crime trends more effectively.
9. Crime has become even more borderless with technological advancements and increased cross-border movements.
10. Singapore has therefore put in place policies and legislation to tackle transnational crimes, such as trafficking in persons, through the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act, and organised criminal groups through the Organised Crime Act enacted in 2015.
11. Our approach has yielded positive outcomes. The overall crime rates, as well as incidence of drug abuse remain low. The Gallup 2020 Global Law and Order Report ranked Singapore first on public perceptions of law and order, for seven consecutive years. In 2020, we had 201 days free of theft, robbery and housebreaking in the country, an increase of 23 days over 2019. Our emphasis on preventing and deterring crime, working hand-in-hand with the community, and an unwavering commitment to the rule of law has allowed us to foster a peaceful, safe and harmonious society.

International Cooperation

12. Efficient domestic law enforcement and national efforts alone are not enough. Regional and international cooperation are also essential to tackling transnational crime.
13. We therefore strongly support the important role of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), and the three international drug control conventions.
14. We also work very closely with the UNODC and our strategic partners from the global law enforcement community, such as INTERPOL. We are an active voice at the FATF, as it sets standards for an effective response to anti-money laundering and terrorism financing.
15. In addition to fighting traditional forms of crime, Singapore is ramping up our responses to tackle new typologies employed by perpetrators of cybercrimes and scams, which are proving to be highly lucrative to the criminals.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration

16. An integral part of an effective crime prevention and criminal justice system is the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. Singapore invests heavily to rehabilitate offenders. We adopt evidence-informed rehabilitation practices and work closely with the community to help ex-offenders reintegrate into society.
17. To garner community support towards helping ex-offenders in their reintegration, we started the Yellow Ribbon Project movement in 2004. The movement seeks to create awareness of the challenges faced by ex-offenders in reintegration and increase acceptance and community action to support the reintegration of ex-offenders into the community.
18. Psychology-based correctional programmes aim to address offenders' criminogenic risks and needs. They can also participate in family support programmes, as well as employability skills training and further education to equip them to lead a crime-free life upon their release.
19. Suitable offenders are emplaced on Community-Based Programmes that allow them to serve the tail-end of their sentences in the community under supervision and care. Ex-offenders who require continual support are linked up with various social service agencies for assistance.
20. Singapore's efforts in throughcare rehabilitation of offenders, coupled with the strong support from the community, have kept our recidivism rate low and stable. About 8 out of 10 local inmates who were released in 2018 stayed out of to prison custody in the first 2 years of release.¹
21. We look forward to sharing more on our rehabilitation efforts at the ancillary meeting entitled "Promoting prison-based rehabilitation programmes and post-release services to foster prisoners' social reintegration", organised by the UNODC on 8 March 2021.

Conclusion

22. Mr Chair, despite these extraordinary times, we must continue to coordinate and intensify crime prevention efforts, nationally, regionally and globally.
23. Singapore remains committed to international efforts in countering transnational organised crime and promoting the rule of law.
24. We are confident that this Congress will achieve its objectives under your able leadership and the efforts of the UNODC.

¹ Recidivism rate is defined as the percentage of local offenders under the custody of the Singapore Prison Service, who were subsequently detained or sentenced to imprisonment or day reporting order within two years of release into the community. This definition has been applied to the 2018 release cohort onwards.

25. Together, we can protect our societies from the scourge of crime and ensure that 'crime does not pay'.

Word Count: 892 Words