



Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

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Successes and challenges in implementing comprehensive crime prevention and criminal justice policies and strategies to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and to support sustainable development

Presidential summary of the High-level Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, held in New York on 25 February 2015

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The President of the General Assembly convened the High-level Thematic Debate on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in the Post-2015 Development Agenda in New York on 25 February 2015. The debate was organized on the initiative of the permanent missions of Italy, Morocco, Qatar and Thailand, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

2. The purpose of the debate was to discuss the overarching question of how to tackle social and economic challenges and promote sustainable development by strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice systems, norms and standards, while combating the threats that undermine them, in particular transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking and corruption. In addition, the debate sought to contribute to the deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda, as well as to provide input to the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, to take place in Doha from 12 to 19 April 2015.

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II. Opening session

3. At the opening session of the Thematic Debate, speakers highlighted that the year 2015 marked the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, whose Charter reaffirmed the “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small”. Speakers observed that, despite that solemn proclamation, many people across the world continued to suffer from the devastating consequences of poverty, crime, terrorism, exclusion, persecution, corruption and deprivation.

4. They stressed that those people demanded — and indeed deserved — accountable governance, fair and accessible justice systems, peaceful societies, personal security and lives of dignity. They further stressed that the international community had a duty to help people everywhere to grasp those opportunities, including by formulating an ambitious, transformative post-2015 universal agenda that was inclusive and firmly rooted in human rights and the rule of law.

5. During the session, speakers underlined that a sustainable development approach required the formulation of effective, integrated and multidimensional strategies. They emphasized that the global character and complexity of contemporary crime necessitated a collective global response.

6. In that context, they noted that the upcoming Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, to be held in April 2015, would provide an important opportunity for Member States and stakeholders to reaffirm a global response to challenges of crime prevention and criminal justice. They further underlined that the outcome of the Congress would provide guidance in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice for the next five years and would mark a renewed common vision and commitment to the implementation of the rule of law and human rights, as well as the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies.

7. Speakers pointed out that crime had the greatest impact on the vulnerable, including women, children and persons with disabilities, as well as the marginalized and those who were discriminated against. They noted, for instance, that crimes such as corruption undermined the delivery of basic services for many people across the globe, as it deprived them of economic and social opportunities and further weakened already fragile institutions.

8. On the rule of law, the speakers noted that the international community had long recognized its importance, particularly in effective crime prevention and for the creation of a strong human rights base. Furthermore, they highlighted that an absence or a deficit of rule of law was among the factors that impeded the realization of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in some instances. They thus stressed that the rule of law constituted a crucial means of advancing development activities at all levels and a factor for strengthening such activities. In that regard, they emphasized the need for the rule of law to be integrated into the development agenda as a fundamental principle.

III. Panel discussions

9. The morning and the afternoon panel discussions were entitled, respectively, “Towards sustainable development: successes and challenges in implementing comprehensive crime prevention and criminal justice policies” and “Shaping the post-2015 development agenda: fostering international cooperation to promote crime prevention and criminal justice policies”.

10. Messages from the participants in both sessions are clustered below.

A. Legal framework

11. Speakers called for adherence to and full implementation of all relevant international instruments, including the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto and existing international drug control conventions. They also called for continued support for the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption as preparations were made for the beginning of its second cycle. Moreover, they noted that the above-mentioned international legal frameworks and the criminal justice standards and norms provided a common platform for Member States to counter serious forms of criminal activity, irrespective of differences in legal systems and traditions and that they allowed for flexibility in the development and implementation of crime prevention and criminal justice policies and strategies.

B. National ownership

12. Speakers stressed that genuine national ownership and leadership were essential in ensuring that crime prevention and criminal justice strategies and institutions effectively promoted the rule of law and sustainable development. They also pointed out the importance of traditional or customary systems of justice that often operated side by side with the formal justice system. Additionally, they underscored the importance of the full independence of judges, the judiciary and prosecutors, as well as of their integrity. Finally, they underlined the need for governments to undertake detailed crime research and analysis, which would enable them to make effective policy choices.

C. Public participation

13. Speakers noted that broad and inclusive public participation in both the development and implementation of crime prevention and criminal justice strategies was critical to their success and effectiveness. They placed special emphasis on the most vulnerable in society, including women, youth and the poor, as well as persons with disabilities, noting that a truly inclusive process characterized by meaningful participation increased the ability of people to contribute to the policy choices that were likely to affect them the most and to hold governmental institutions accountable. They observed that such public participation could also help develop and foster a culture of lawfulness through education and access to information,

which could be a powerful driver of crime prevention. The importance of the participation of civil society organizations to enable them to hold governments accountable for their commitments was particularly emphasized.

D. International cooperation and partnerships

14. Speakers noted that international cooperation among Member States and inter-agency coordination and cooperation were critical in tackling crime, which had become more sophisticated and transnational in nature. In that regard, they stressed that international cooperation in fighting transnational organized crime should go hand in hand with effective access to justice for all and must also include a focus on strengthening capacity to monitor trafficking in persons, arms, drugs, wildlife and cultural property, as well as illicit financial flows.

15. Speakers recognized the UNODC Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime and called upon the international community to support its efforts, including those aimed at promoting international cooperation and partnerships to strengthen criminal justice systems at the regional level. They underscored that effective international cooperation encompassed law enforcement partnerships, including the sharing of information, data and intelligence; mutual legal assistance in its broadest sense and procedures that were streamlined and efficient; and extradition procedures that allowed for flexibility and accommodated differences in legal systems.

16. Furthermore, speakers noted that strengthened implementation of relevant conventions, as well as the role of regional and subregional organizations and agreements, were critical components in facilitating effective and efficient international cooperation. They called for strengthened partnerships between governments and other donors, private sector experts, non-governmental and civil society organizations, the media and academia.

E. Technical assistance and capacity-building

17. Speakers underlined the importance of technical assistance for strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice strategies and institutions, particularly in developing and post-conflict States. In addition, they stressed the need to transfer technology and equipment necessary for law enforcement to effectively investigate and meet the challenges of increasingly mobile and sophisticated criminal activity. In that regard, they highlighted the importance of strengthening the capacity of UNODC and acknowledged ongoing activities and assistance provided by UNODC, the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

F. Development of indicators

18. Speakers noted that the goals and targets to be agreed upon in the post-2015 development agenda, especially those relating to crime prevention and criminal justice and the rule of law, would need to be accompanied by appropriate indicators so as to enable States to measure progress in implementation, including indicators

on the effectiveness of criminal justice institutions. It was noted in particular that there was a meaningful opportunity for UNODC and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to provide valuable advice on technical indicators and metrics in crime prevention and criminal justice with regard to several goals and targets to be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda. In that regard, speakers pointed out that the Commission could draw on existing resources and tools, including data gathered by UNODC and other agencies on global crime trends and the operation of national justice systems. They further stressed that developing countries and those in post-conflict situations would be in particular need of international support and assistance to strengthen their data collection capacities, as well as statistical and analytical departments.

G. Specific proposals

19. Participants recommended the following:

(a) The thematic reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, should take into consideration the normative work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and then channel it to the executive boards and specialized agencies, funds and programmes for their support to countries in the field of the implementation of policy guidance;

(b) During its current session, the General Assembly should consider a resolution on illegal trade in wildlife, which had adverse impacts on sustainable development, biodiversity and stability in some regions;

(c) The Congress should consider the gaps inherent in the implementation of existing international legal instruments for combating transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking and terrorism.

IV. Closing session

20. In his concluding remarks, the President of the General Assembly stressed that in order to deliver on their promises of sustainable development, Member States must ensure that societies are secure and peaceful, including through the promotion of the rule of law and the strengthening of criminal justice systems that uphold the fundamental principles of justice, fairness and equality.

21. The President noted that the Thirteenth Congress would provide a historic opportunity to further discuss the importance of integrating the rule of law and criminal justice in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.