PRESENTATION

by the Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
Minister of Justice H.E. Mr. Fikrat Mammadov

at the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice “Integrating crime prevention and criminal justice into the wider UN agenda to address social and economic challenges and to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and public participation”

Doha, Qatar
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Presentation by the Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Minister of Justice H.E. Mr. Fikrat Mammadov at the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice “Integrating crime prevention and criminal justice into the wider UN agenda to address social and economic challenges and to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and public participation”,

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Dear Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me express my gratitude to the Government of Qatar for the excellent organization of the Congress and the warm hospitality.

The theme of the Congress, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, is of utmost importance. It goes in line with the words of Mr. Ban Ki-moon that “the rule of law prevents corruption, illicit financial flows and transnational organized crime”.

Dear colleagues,

As was confirmed by the previous Congress in Salvador, the legislative framework that meets today’s challenges - is the key to effective crime prevention, which is important from the rule of law perspective. In order to implement laws effectively it is vital to develop strategies. We have ourselves experienced the efficiency of the strategies. After Salvador we have adopted strategies and action plans on combatting corruption, human trafficking, transparency and public participation. Laws on the fight against terrorism and illegal migration have also been updated. And we criminalized taking part in international armed conflicts. I know that some of my colleagues have also been working on this issue given its global relevance.
It is well known that the rule of law also depends on the efficiency of justice system and access to justice. No coincidence that the UN has included this issue within its five peacebuilding and State-building goals.

In Azerbaijan also, a strong political stipulated and fostered a profound judicial reform. Thus, a body of judicial self-government - the Judicial Legal Council having been established was endowed with the gradually expanding powers. Guarantees of the judicial independence were strengthened and new mechanisms for combating influence and interference with judges' activities were introduced. We even passed a law which prohibits reduction of judges' salaries. Unfortunately, the global economic crisis led to such negative trends in some countries.

To improve access to justice we have significantly increased number of courts and judges, in cooperation with the World Bank we upgrade judicial infrastructure while creating hi-tech courts and have launched the e-justice system.

To increase public confidence in courts we developed a fully transparent procedure for the selection of judges, which is even broadcasted online on the Internet. Our experience has been evaluated by the EU and the Council of Europe as best practice.

Prison reform is also relevant from the perspective of the Congress topics. We focus on modernization of the prison infrastructure, ensuring the rights of prisoners and humanization of punishment. We improved medical care in a way that the death rate has been minimized. It also covers fighting TB, where we have reached great success. At the initiative of the ICRC many countries have already got familiar with our best practice in this area. We are happy to share it further on.

Turning to another item of the Congress, I would like to note that public, especially human rights activists are being actively involved in the process of securing rights of prisoners and their rehabilitation. Country displaying openness in public administration adopted a special law “On public
participation”. Our experience has already attracted attention of many countries.

Educational mechanisms with convicted persons have also been improved. Particularly it concerns release on parole. Along with the engagement of wider public in this process recently relatives of the convicts and even victims of crime have been attending these hearings. Innovations in this area practically reduced recidivism among parolees to zero.

I can not overlook the other global challenge, covered by the Congress items, which is the fight against corruption that impedes development and promotes inequality and injustice, undermines the rule of law. The fight against this evil is one of the top priorities of our state policy. Without mentioning criminal and legal actions on combatting corruption I would like to share our innovation in this area. At the initiative of our President H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network (ASAN) was established. The Service upholds classic “one-stop-shop” principle where 10 different state entities promptly render 30 different services. The main principle here is “customer satisfaction”. Within the 2 years almost 3 and a half million people, which is more than a third of the population of Azerbaijan, benefited from the services of these regional centers, as well as of mobile ASAN buses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Growth of crime, especially a transnational one stipulates increase of the efficiency of international cooperation. We joined all regional instruments in this field in Europe. Cooperation with other states of the world is build up also on the basis of bilateral treaties. At the same time, we have adopted specific laws on extradition and legal assistance, which endorse cooperation even without a treaty. This allowed us to extradite dangerous criminals who have committed acts of terrorism, murder, kidnapping and human trafficking. I think this practice is worth mentioning.

International organizations also play an important role in promoting
effective international cooperation in the fight against crime. International Association of Prosecutors (IAP), which has consultative status with the ECOSOC, is one of such organizations. Azerbaijan is playing an active role in the Association and took over the mission to launch and manage the IAP web-network for prosecutors fighting corruption. Presentation of this network was held these days in neighboring Bahrain.

However, sometimes international cooperation is hampered when it comes to uncontrolled conflict-affected territories. After all, they are widely used by private companies of the Member States for illegal economic activities and related crimes, profits of which often provide funding for terrorism etc. Cases of illegal detention and arbitrary trials against innocent civilians have been observed in these zones, too.

To my deep regret, there is such a place in my country. It emerged as a result of aggression by neighboring Armenia, which has lasted for more than 25 years now. One fifth of the country is occupied, there are 1 million refugees and IDPs, hundreds of historical and cultural monuments have been looted and destroyed.

To conclude I would like to note that we fully support the Doha Declaration that defines a wide range of actions to combat crime. I am confident that this Congress will give an additional impetus to the exchange of best practices in the fight against crime; improving mechanisms for international cooperation; public involvement in strengthening criminal justice systems.

Thank you for your attention.