

UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.6/INF.2
11 July 1955

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

FIRST UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS ON THE PREVENTION
OF CRIME AND THE TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS

Geneva, 22 August - 3 September 1955

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

The First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders is convened in pursuance of resolution 415 (V) of the General Assembly. It is, from an historical point of view, the continuation of the quinquennial congresses previously organized by the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, the last of which was held at The Hague in August 1950.

I. NOTES ON THE AGENDA

The Congress will consider the following items:

- (1) Standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners;
- (2) Selection and training of personnel for penal and correctional institutions;
- (3) Open penal and correctional institutions;
- (4) Prison Labour;
- (5) Prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Short information on each of these items is given below together with a summary description of the papers submitted. Information concerning the scheme and distribution of documents will be found in II below.

1. Standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners

The Congress will be called upon to examine a set of draft rules prepared by the Secretariat in the light of the deliberations of the United Nations

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regional conferences on the draft standard minimum rules which were adopted in 1951 by the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission. It should be noted that the draft rules are not meant to be purely optional, but on the contrary to be in the nature of a pledge on the part of prison administrations. Since the draft rules have already been examined at the regional level, the question will not be so much to reopen a discussion of each rule at this advanced stage, as to examine whether, in fact, they are minimum rules and rules of general application. Thus it will be necessary to determine whether they are flexible enough to take into account ethnical, legislative and customary characteristics of the various regions, as well as differences owing to the climate, levels of living, etc. Finally, the Congress will be called upon to express its views on the best way in which the rules can be disseminated and embodied in the practice of prison administration throughout the world.

Documentation

A report by the Secretariat (A/CONF.6/C.1/L.1) will present for each rule a proposal by the Secretariat, accompanied by a short description of action taken, if any, by regional conferences with regard to the original draft of the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission. The project is sub-divided into "Preliminary observations" (rules 1 to 6), "Rules of general application" (rules 7 to 56), and "Rules applicable to special categories" (rules 57 to 95).

2. Selection and training of personnel for penal and correctional institutions

The Congress will afford an opportunity for an examination of the present practice and standards in various countries with regard to the selection and training of personnel for adult penal and correctional institutions. Draft recommendations prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the resolutions adopted at the United Nations regional conferences will allow the Congress to consider all aspects of the question, with a view to agreeing on a set of final recommendations. The policy-making bodies of the United Nations could call the attention of Governments to these recommendations at a later stage, to guide them in the improvement of existing standards and practices.

Documentation

The Secretariat's draft recommendations will be presented in a report (A/CONF.6/C.1/L.2) dealing with the modern conception of the prison service, the various categories of staff, their status and conditions of service, the competent authority for recruitment and the conditions of recruitment, as well as training prior to final appointment and in-service training.

In addition, approximately thirty national reports (A/CONF.6/C.1/L.3, et. seq.) will describe concrete examples of programmes for the selection and training of personnel for adult penal and correctional institutions in operation in selected countries throughout the world.

3. Open penal and correctional institutions

It is generally recognized that the place of the open institution in a modern penal system, in its relationship with the development of custodial differentiation as well as with the economy of the country, is one of the basic problems facing prison administrations at the present time. Experience gathered and principles evolved since 1950, when the question of open institutions was considered by the Twelfth International Penal and Penitentiary Congress at The Hague, will be discussed at the Congress in order to assess the various aspects of the problem and to formulate principles which might be useful with a view to making the best possible use of this form of deprivation of liberty.

Documentation

A report by the Secretariat (A/CONF.6/C.2/L.1) will summarize the findings of the United Nations regional conferences on the subject and offer a set of recommendations for consideration by the Congress. The report will deal inter alia with the definition of an open institution, its administrative organization, and the conditions of its efficient operation, the criteria for the selection of offenders, and the advantages of the open system.

Participants will also receive two special reports prepared by consultants on "The place of the open institution in the penal system and in the community"

(A/CONF.6/C.2/L.2) and on "The selection of offenders suitable for treatment in open institutions" (A/CONF.6/C.2/L.3).

Finally, approximately twenty-five national reports (A/CONF.6/C.2/L.4 et. seq.) will describe concrete examples of open institutions in operation in selected countries throughout the world.

4. Prison labour

In 1953 and 1954 the Secretariat of the United Nations conducted a comprehensive survey on prison labour, with the co-operation of its correspondents in the field of the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders and of the correspondents of the International Labour Office throughout the world. The material thus gathered, completed from other sources, served as a basis for a general study on prison labour, the preparation of which was entrusted to a consultant.

Documentation

The text of this study (ST/SOA/SD/5) will be made available to participants in the Congress as the basic document for the consideration of this question. The study deals with various problems such as the purposes and the legal and administrative bases of prison labour, the systems of organizing prison labour and its relationships to private enterprise and to public works, the problem of competition with free labour and industry, the remuneration of prisoners, the regulations governing expenditures and aid to dependents, prison labour in the light of the offender's occupational background and his post-release employment opportunities, and the measures of social protection applying to working prisoners.

Moreover, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee of Experts which will meet before the Congress (see IV/1 below) will recommend which aspects of this matter should be emphasized during the discussion, and possibly submit to the Congress a tentative set of principles for its consideration.

5. Prevention of juvenile delinquency

In considering the question of juvenile delinquency, the emphasis will be placed on prevention, in accordance with the recommendation to that effect made in 1953 by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee of Experts on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders. The importance of this problem is generally recognized today, and its gravity is emphasized by the fact that a substantial part of adult crime is merely a prolongation of delinquent activities begun at an early age. The need for an exchange of views and of information in this field at the international level, with a view to formulating principles and policies which might be of help to the various countries, is particularly acute.

Prevention can generally be said to take two main forms: prevention at the pre-delinquent stage, and post-delinquent prevention or the prevention of recidivism. With respect to the former, while it is usually acknowledged that general measures aimed at raising levels of living have an indirect relationship to the prevention of juvenile delinquency, specific preventive measures are more important in this connexion in view of their direct bearing on the problem. The measures of treatment applied to juveniles, on the other hand, also have a bearing on the prevention of recidivism.

Documentation

A report by the Secretariat on "The prevention of juvenile delinquency" (International Review of Criminal Policy, No. 7-8) will present fundamental considerations for the formulation of a policy in this field, deal with the scope and meaning of prevention, the role of the state, the community, the family, the school, the police and the social services, as well as the role of courts and treatment measures in the prevention of juvenile delinquency, and present proposals to be considered by the Congress.

Participants will also receive a study prepared by a consultant on "The prevention of juvenile delinquency in selected European countries" (ST/SOA/SD/6), which will describe the provisions of the laws relating to pre-delinquency, medico-psychological and educational measures and social measures in use at the present time, and deal with the problem of the organization of research.

In addition, reports on this question will be presented by the International Labour Organisation, by the World Health Organization and by UNESCO. It is also expected that most of the statements to be submitted by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council will deal with the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

II. DOCUMENTATION

Documentation prepared specially for the Congress will be issued under the symbol of A/CONF.6. The further sub-divisions of the symbol /C.1, /C.2, refer to the section in which the subject matter of the document will be considered. In addition some documents prepared in implementation of the regular work programme of the United Nations in the field of social defence will also be submitted to the Congress. Those will bear a symbol in the ST/SOA series. Documents by specialized agencies prepared for the Congress will be distributed in principle as documents of the agencies concerned. Finally, a certain number of statements prepared by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council will also be circulated to participants. These statements are not being issued as United Nations documents, and they will not bear any symbol.

A large part of the documentation for the Congress has been printed in English by the United States Federal Bureau of Prisons, and in French by the French Prison Administration, owing to the generous co-operation of these administrations.

Documents prepared by the Secretariat and by consultants will be issued as far as possible in full in three languages, i.e. English, French and Spanish, and will be distributed to participants in one of these languages. On the other hand, national reports on the selection and training of personnel and on open institutions will be issued in their original language only, and they will be distributed to all participants in that language. Each of these reports, however, is followed by a summary in the two other languages. Documents submitted by specialized agencies and by non-governmental organizations will be distributed in the languages in which they will have been made available.

The first dispatch of documents to registered participants took place in the second part of May. Other participants will receive a first batch of documents a few weeks after communication to the Secretariat of their appointment as government delegates or as representatives of a non-governmental organization, or after acceptance of their application as an individual participant. Documents will be distributed partly from New York and partly from Geneva.

Every effort is made to mail the greatest number possible of documents to participants in advance of the Congress. Documents, however, which will not be available for mailing at a reasonable date in advance of the Congress will be distributed on the opening day.

Each participant will receive only one set of documents, whether or not he attends the Congress in more than one capacity. As only a limited number of Congress documents can be issued and since they must be distributed to governments and United Nations depository libraries throughout the world, a further distribution at the opening of the Congress will not be possible. All participants are therefore urgently requested to take with them to Geneva all the Congress documents which they have received in advance by mail.

A brief description of the documents on each question to be considered is given in I above. A complete list of documents will be distributed to all participants at the beginning of the Congress.

III. PARTICIPATION

1. Governments

Eighty-five governments have been invited to participate in the Congress, by appointing delegates who are experts in the field of the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders and have a special knowledge of, or experience in, the questions on the agenda. In view of the nature of the Congress, opinions expressed by the delegates will be their personal opinions.

2. Specialized agencies and inter-governmental organizations

The International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organization and UNESCO, as well as four inter-governmental organizations, have been invited to send representatives to the Congress.

3. Non-governmental organizations

In addition, an invitation to designate representatives to attend the Congress has also been sent to fifty non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, as well as to seven other international non-governmental organizations.

4. Individual participants

Finally, the Secretariat has already received a considerable number of applications from persons wishing to attend the Congress in an individual capacity, i.e. from specialists in the field of the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders and from representatives of national agencies, organizations or schools particularly concerned with this matter.

5. List of participants

On 10 July 1955, more than 350 persons from forty-seven countries and territories had been registered as participants in the Congress.

A complete list of participants will be prepared for distribution as soon as possible after the beginning of the Congress.

It is recalled that there will be no registration fee for the Congress; on the other hand, expenses of participants will be borne by the governments, organizations and individuals concerned.

IV. WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

1. Advisory Committee of Experts

An Ad Hoc Advisory Committee of Experts on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, to be convened by the Secretary-General in accordance with General Assembly resolution 415 (V), will meet in Geneva from

8 to 16 August 1955 and among its functions it will act as a preparatory committee for the Congress. The Committee will make recommendations on various questions pertaining to the work of the Congress.

2. Opening and registration

The Congress will open at 11 a.m. on Monday, 22 August 1955, at the European Office of the United Nations, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

Participants will have access to the Palais des Nations through the main entrance of the Assembly, Door 14, Avenue de la Paix. There they will receive, either verbally or through a notice, all necessary information with regard to the exact place for registration and for the distribution of documents.

3. Rules of procedure

The rules of procedure for the Congress will be prepared by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in accordance with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts convened in 1953 under the terms of resolution 415 (V) of the General Assembly.

In conformity with United Nations procedure, the rules will reserve to the delegates of governments the right to vote on formal recommendations, which are to be submitted to the policy-making bodies of the United Nations. They will, however, ensure adequate expression of views by the representatives of non-governmental organizations and by individual participants. The rules will also provide that all meetings of the Congress shall be public.

The rules of procedure will be distributed to all participants at the opening of the Congress.

4. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee of the Congress will be composed of the President and the General Rapporteur of the Congress, the chairman of the sections, the members of the Advisory Committee of Experts referred to under 1 above, the Representative of the Secretary-General and the Executive Secretary of the Congress. The Steering Committee will assume the general direction of the work of the Congress, and act whenever necessary as a resolutions committee.

5. United Nations officials

The Secretary-General has nominated Mr. Manuel Lopez-Rey Chief of the Section of Social Defence in the Secretariat, as his representative at the Congress; Mr. Paul Amor, Regional Representative in the field of social defence, as Executive Secretary and Mr. Paul Berthoud, member of the Section of Social Defence, as Assistant Executive Secretary of the Congress. Other members of the Secretariat will act as Secretaries to each of the three sections.

6. Organization of work

For the purpose of dealing with the items on its agenda (see I above), the Congress will be divided into three sections which will report to the plenary meetings. Officers of the sections, i.e. a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Rapporteur and, if necessary, Consultants, will be appointed for each question to be considered.

The work of the sections will be allocated as follows:

- Section I: (a) Standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners;
- (b) Selection and training of personnel for penal and correctional institutions.
- Section II: (a) Open penal and correctional institutions;
- (b) Prison labour.
- Section III: Prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Each participant will choose the section of which he wishes to be a member. He may, however, attend the meetings of more than one section.

7. Provisional schedule of meetings

The provisional schedule of meetings is as follows:

	Monday 22	Tuesday 23	Wednesday 24	Thursday 25	Friday 26	Saturday 27	Sunday 28
AM	Plenary (opening)	Section I Section III	Section I Section II		Section II Section III	Section I Section II Section III	Free
PM	Section I Section II Section III	Section I Section II	Section II Section III	Visits to Institutions	Section I Section III	Optional visits to institutions	
		Lecture	Films		Lecture		
	Monday 29	Tuesday 30	Wednesday 31	Thursday 1	Friday 2	Saturday 3	
AM	Section I Section II Section III	Section I Section II Section III	Section I Section II	Section II Section III	Plenary	Plenary (closing)	
PM	Plenary	Plenary	Section I Section III	Section I Section II	Plenary	Optional visits to institutions	
		Lecture	Films	Lecture			

Morning meetings are scheduled to be held from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (except on the opening day), and afternoon meetings from 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. General lectures and film showings (see V below) are scheduled to take place at 5:15 p.m.

8. Languages

The working languages of the Congress will be English, French and Spanish, and simultaneous interpretation from and into these three languages will be provided for all section and plenary meetings. Participants will be allowed to speak in a language other than the working languages if they make provision for the interpretation of their statement into one of the working languages.

9. Facilities for non-governmental organizations

Representatives of non-governmental organizations invited to attend the Congress should apply on arrival to the Non-Governmental Organizations' Liaison Section, Room 141, Ext. 2126, 2127. This Section will be able to give them information on various matters connected with their participation in the Congress. It has also been arranged that a Common Room, equipped with telephones and writing tables, will be put at the disposal of representatives of such non-governmental organizations.

V. RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. General lectures

It is planned that five prominent specialists, from Asia and the Far East, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America respectively, will each deliver a general lecture on the main trends existing in his region of the world in the field of the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders. These lectures will take place following afternoon meetings of the Congress.

2. Showing of films

Two showings of films of direct interest to participants will also take place following afternoon meetings.

3. Visits to institutions

No meetings will be held on Thursday, 25 August 1955, and the whole day will be devoted to visits of institutions organized by the Swiss authorities. Optional visits to institutions may also be organized on the afternoons of Saturday, 27 August and of Saturday, 3 September 1955.

Moreover, visits to institutions will be organized in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom during the week following the Congress, i.e., between 5 and 10 September 1955. Each of these countries will receive groups of approximately forty participants. All participants will receive directly from Geneva a special circular with respect to this matter.

It is also planned to organize visits to institutions in the United States of America after the Congress, for participants who intend to travel through that country on their way back from the Congress. Information on those visits will be given in due course to interested participants.

4. Exhibition

Steps to organize a small international exhibition on matters of interest to participants have been taken by the Secretariat. The exhibition will probably be situated in the Library of the Palais des Nations.

VI. ACCOMODATION AND TRAVEL

Participants will have to make their own arrangements for accomodation in Geneva. The European Office of the United Nations will send to each participant a note with a form for the reservation of hotel rooms. Participants may send this form directly to the Association des Intérêts de Genève, which will then endeavour to make the requested reservation.

Similarly, participants will make their own travel arrangements. Thomas Cook and Sons, Travel Agents, will have an office at the Palais des Nations during the Congress.

VII. THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON CRIMINOLOGY

The attention of participants in the Congress is called to the fact that the Third International Congress on Criminology organized by the International Society of Criminology will be held in London, England, from 12 to 18 September 1955. This meeting will be devoted to the subject of recidivism. Further information concerning the meeting may be obtained from the Organizing Secretary, Third International Congress on Criminology, 28 Weymouth Street, London, W.1, England.

This archiving project is a collaborative effort between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and American Society of Criminology, Division of International Criminology. Any comments or questions should be directed to Cindy J. Smith at CJSmithphd@comcast.net or Emil Wandzilak at emil.wandzilak@unodc.org.