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

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

The first meeting of the United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders was held at the Palais des Nations this morning. The Congress elected Mr. Edouard de Steiger, former Federal Councillor and former President of the Swiss Confederation, as its President, and heard statements by Mr. Adrian Pelt, Director of the European Office of the United Nations, Mr. de Steiger and Mr. Lopez-Rey, Chief of the Social Defence Section, representing the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

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The First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders convened at 11 a.m. this morning at the Palais des Nations.

Mr. Adrian PELT, Director of the European Office of the United Nations, opened the Congress and, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, welcomed the participants.

He pointed out that historically the Congress could be regarded as carrying on the international meetings which had been organized by the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission for nearly three-quarters of a century. He stressed that the contribution which the United Nations was making to international co-operation in the same field had three main features : a universal conception of such co-operation; a persistent effort to place the problem of the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders in a broader social context; and the desire to provide direct assistance to governments and individuals in solving the problems facing them in this field.

Referring to the regional conferences which the United Nations had organized, Mr. Pelt pointed out that an effort had been made to study crime as a social phenomenon. Untold possibilities were opened up by international collaboration in the concrete social problem of the man who has fallen foul of the law or the child who cannot find a place in a society which has a duty to make room for him. The problem of the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders takes on a distinctly social character, both with regard to the study of the problem itself and in respect of the constant concern to regard it in its relationship with other social problems.

The Congress next took up the question of the election of its President. Mr. J.P. HOOYKAAS, Head of the Netherlands delegation, speaking on behalf of the Argentine, Chilean, French, Iranian, United Kingdom and United States delegations as well as his own, nominated Mr. Edouard de Steiger, former Federal Councillor and former President of the Swiss Confederation. Mr. de Steiger was elected President by acclamation. ./.

Mr. Edouard de-STEIGER then addressed the Congress as President. After referring to the "Geneva spirit", which permitted the discussion of all major political problems with a view to finding constructive and peaceful solutions, he congratulated the Secretariat on the reports it had submitted; those reports placed the discussions on a high moral level, revealing as they did the criminal's tragedy in its entirety and the imperative duty of finding means for ensuring his social redemption. Mr. de Steiger expressed the hope that international collaboration would be still further promoted as a result of the labours of the Congress and that the Congress itself would accomplish a juridical and social task which was essential to the wellbeing and security of the peoples of the world.

The Congress then elected the following Vice-Presidents by acclamation :

M. Fernand Arsenies	Procureur général près la Cour de Cassation, <u>Lebanon</u>
M. Paul Cornil	Secrétaire général du Ministère de la Justice, Président de l'Association internationale de droit pénal, <u>Belgium</u> .
Sir Lionel Fox, C.B., M.C.	Chairman of the Prison Commission, <u>United Kingdom</u>
Mr. William P. Rogers	Deputy Attorney General of the <u>United States of America</u>
Dr. Evelio Tabio y de Castro Palomine	Judge at the Supreme Court, <u>Cuba</u>
Shri Paripurnanand Verma, M.L.A.	President of the All-India Crime Prevention Society, <u>India</u>

The Congress also elected the following by acclamation as Honorary Vice-Presidents : Mr. Sanford Bates (United States of America); Mr. Adolphe Delferieux (Belgium, former Deputy Director of the Social Defence Section of the United Nations Secretariat); Mr. Karl Schlyter (Sweden); and Mr. Mostafa El Said (Egypt).

Mr. LOPEZ-REY (Chief of the Social Defence Section) next extended a welcome to participants in his capacity as representative of the Secretary-General at the Congress. He drew attention to the differences between the present Congress and those previously organized by the former International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, and pointed out that all social questions must be considered as an integral part of the United Nations work programme. He emphasized that the recommendations of the Congress would be submitted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Social Commission of the Economic and Social Council, which would take appropriate decisions for the purpose of giving them the largest possible measure of practical effect.

The Secretariat, he continued, had submitted about eighty documents to the Congress. Texts which represented a synthesis of those approved at the various regional meetings had been prepared and would serve as a basis for the Congress' discussions. The Congress would have to decide whether those texts could enable the adoption of generally applicable rules. The prevention of juvenile delinquency should be approached from two points of view, from the point of view of general prevention by means of a social policy designed to provide adequate social services whereby living conditions can be improved, and from the point of view of special prevention directed towards restricted groups of juveniles. Future action must, therefore, he concluded, be based on that co-ordination of effort which was one of the main aims of the United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.

As from this afternoon the work of the Congress will be divided among the following sections :

- Section I : Standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners
- Section II : Open institutions
- Section III : Prevention of juvenile delinquency.

All three sections will meet at 2.30 p.m.

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.