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FIRST UN CONGRESS ON THE PREVENTION
OF CRIME AND TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS

CONGRESS ADOPTS RECOMMENDATIONS ON
PRISON LABOUR

The United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders met in plenary at 10 a.m. today under the chairmanship of Mr. E. de STEIGER (Switzerland). It examined the recommendations adopted by Section II on prison labour.

Mr. Ernest LAMERS (Netherlands), Rapporteur of the Section, submitted the recommendations (document A/CONF.6/L.8). Prison labour, he explained, was a means of preventing idleness, maintaining order and - for the prisoners - setting aside savings. Work was thus the basis of the prison system.

The Rapporteur pointed out that, unlike the other items on the Congress' agenda, the question of prison labour had not been examined by all four Regional Consultative Groups but only by the European Group. However, the Section had agreed on general principles and was recommending the further study of a number of questions by the Groups.

The Congress then embarked on a detailed study of the Section's recommendations and agreed to nine general principles. These lay it down that prisoners should be required to work; take account of the conditions under which such work should be performed; stress the importance of vocational training and vocational tests; call for precautions to protect the safety and health of prisoners; advocate equitable remuneration for their work and arrangements for them to go out daily to work during the last few months prior to release.

Mr. Edward R. CLASS (United States of America) submitted an amendment to paragraph II of the recommendations, to replace the last two sentences by a passage to the effect that it was preferable for the work of the prisoners to be based on a State-use system with compulsory government markets, but that recourse might be had to private industry when sound reasons exist provided adequate safeguards were established to ensure that there was no exploitation of prison labour and that the interests of private industry were protected.

The amendment was adopted by 15 votes to 14, with one abstention.

On the proposal of Mr. Paul CORNIL (Belgium), the Congress adopted an amendment to the effect that remuneration of the prisoners should be "sufficient to enable them, at least in part, to help their families to indemnify their victims, to further their own interests, etc.". The amendment was adopted by 20 votes to 15, with one abstention.

The Congress also took note of the fact that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) had taken steps towards a review of the Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour.

The Congress then recommended that further study be given, especially by Regional Consultative Groups, to a number of questions, including the integration of prison labour with the national economy; methods of remuneration; appropriate prison labour programmes for special categories of offenders; the special problems encountered with regard to labour programmes for untried prisoners; and the measures to be taken to ensure that the sentence of a prisoner should not be an insurmountable obstacle to his finding work after release.

The Congress unanimously adopted the set of recommendations as amended.

Mr. Thorsten SELLIN (United States of America), the General Rapporteur, then presented a draft resolution to the Congress (document A/CONF.6/L.9) whereby it requested the Secretary-General to submit the recommendations adopted to the Social Commission of the Economic and Social Council; expressed the hope that the Council would endorse the general principles contained therein and recommend to governments to take them as fully as possible into account in their practice and when considering legislative and administrative reforms; and called attention in particular to the proposals for further study and expressed the hope that the Social Commission would find it advisable to include those topics in the Regional Consultative Groups' future work programme.

The draft resolution was adopted by acclamation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m. The Congress is to take up the last item on the agenda - the prevention of juvenile delinquency - at 2.30 p.m. this afternoon.

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.