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Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

San José, 4–6 February 2025

Draft report

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Addendum

II. Recommendations – Agenda item 4

A. Main theme of the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: “Accelerating crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: protecting people and planet and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the digital age”

1. The Secretary [f] of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting recalled that in accordance with General Assembly resolution 77/231, efforts had been made to ensure that the overall theme, the agenda items and workshop topics were streamlined. The Secretary reminded participants that, since the main theme was designed to serve as an umbrella for the substantive agenda items and workshop topics and for the discussions under those that would take place at the Congress, they were invited to engage in a general, aspirational discussion with regard to the relationship between the main theme and the substantive agenda items of the Congress, as well as the policy implications of that relationship.

2. Presentations were delivered by representatives of the Secretariat introducing the main theme, substantive agenda items and workshop topics. Statements were made by the representatives of Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Colombia, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, Uruguay, Guatemala, Peru, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Canada, Panama and Honduras. Statements were also made by the observers for Viet Nam, United Arab Emirates, Instituto Brasileiro de Direitos Humanos, the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, International Legal Foundation, Research Centre for Feminist Action, Housing Works Inc., Asistencia Legal por los Derechos Humanos and Association for the Prevention of Torture.



Summary of deliberations

3. During the discussions on the main theme of the Congress, some speakers highlighted the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Pact for the Future in guiding the regional recommendations for the Fifteenth Crime Congress. Many speakers referred to the critical role of the rule of law and of fair, inclusive and efficient criminal justice systems in promoting sustainable development and human rights.
4. Speakers expressed concern about the increase in criminal activity in the region, including organized crime and interpersonal violence, as well as the linkages between various forms of organized crime. Speakers referred to a variety of crimes affecting the region, including drug trafficking, corruption, firearms trafficking, trafficking in persons, money-laundering, the smuggling of migrants, cybercrime, financial crimes, crimes that affect the environment such as illegal mining, gang violence and gender-based violence.
5. Speakers highlighted the need to address all forms of organized crime through the existing international legal instruments, such as the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols.
6. International cooperation emerged as a recurring priority in effectively addressing crime, including through intelligence sharing, cross-border operations, mutual legal assistance and extradition.
7. Several speakers called for equal access to justice for all to be at the centre of global policies on criminal justice, highlighting a number of initiatives such as government-funded public defenders as an effective form of legal aid provision, and the implementation of technologies for mobile justice services. The use of restorative justice was mentioned, as well as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to ease caseloads for the judiciary.
8. Some participants welcomed the recommendations from the Expert Group Meeting on Access to Justice for All, hosted by Brazil and Canada, held in Brasilia from 9 to 11 December 2024.
9. A number of speakers highlighted the importance of asset recovery as a means of safeguarding resources to support victims, and provide for reparations, especially in cases of trafficking in persons.
10. Many speakers stressed the importance of investing in prevention as a means to address the root causes of crime, such as poverty and social exclusion, and to prioritize socioeconomic development, with a focus on youth and community engagement.
11. A number of speakers underscored the linkage between climate change and increased criminal activity, including the risk for increase in population displacement and their vulnerabilities. Some speakers recalled the UNTOC COP resolution 10/6 that called for the identification of gaps and responses in the international legal framework to crimes that affect the environment and the establishment of the Expert Group on Crimes that Affect the Environment, noting that the effects of crimes that affect the environment must be addressed, including their consequences for persons in vulnerable situations and Indigenous populations.
12. Cybercrime was identified as a growing global threat, with several speakers welcoming the recently adopted United Nations Cybercrime Convention. The need to address cybercrime with frameworks that protect human rights was underscored in this regard.
13. A number of speakers mentioned the importance of promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of persons deprived of liberty, guaranteeing their health, including mental health, and education, to reduce recidivism.
14. Speakers referred to the need for data-driven and evidence-based criminal justice policies.

15. Several speakers highlighted the alarming levels of violence against women and emphasized the need of integrating a gender-responsive approach into crime prevention and criminal justice policies, in order, among others, to eliminate femicide.

Outcome of deliberations

16. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:

(a) Strengthen international cooperation, including systems for real-time data exchange, cross-border cooperation, extradition and mutual legal assistance;

(b) Promote cooperation at the local, national and international levels to address the challenges posed by various forms of crime, including organized crime;

(c) Strengthen domestic legal frameworks to comply with obligations established in the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime;

(d) Increase the use of asset confiscation to combat organized criminal groups, as well as international cooperation for asset recovery to, inter alia, provide for adequate reparations to victims;

(e) Strengthen action against illicit trafficking in firearms to address violence in the region;

(f) Strengthen access to justice for all, such as through government funded public defenders;

(g) Integrate climate-resilient strategies into law enforcement operations and enhance penalties for crimes that affect the environment, while also considering their connection to other forms of transnational organized crime;

(h) Develop legal safeguards and strengthen policies to prevent the prosecution of victims of trafficking in persons;

(i) Protect smuggled and undocumented migrants against crime and build trust with law enforcement, provide trauma-informed training for officers handling migrant-related cases and establish anonymous migrant crime reporting hotlines and safe spaces for reporting abuse against migrants;

(j) Strengthen cooperation with a broad range of stakeholders on crime prevention initiatives, including civil society and faith-based organizations, public-private partnerships, as well as developing educational and vocational training programmes;

(k) Implement human rights safeguards as an integral part of the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime;

(l) Foster inter-institutional coordination among relevant entities involved in combatting crime, and consider reducing the financial profit of organized crime as a way of effectively addressing this challenge.