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European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

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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 Chief of the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies of UNODC, acting as the Secretary of the European 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 the workshop topics were streamlined. She 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 thereunder 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.

2. Presentations were delivered by a representative of the Secretariat introducing the main theme, substantive agenda items and workshop topics. Statements were made by representatives of the Russian Federation, Spain, Azerbaijan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Armenia, the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Italy and Germany.

3. A statement was also made by a representative of the European Union,¹ in its capacity as observer.

4. Statements were also further made by the observers for the International Crime Police Organization (INTERPOL), the European Public Law Organisation, the

¹ Also on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union.



Council of Europe and the International Scientific and Professional Advisory Council (ISPAC).

5. Statements were furthermore made by the Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations in Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Association for the Prevention of Torture, Global Initiative against International Organized Crime, Wildlife Conservation Society, Stichting Wildlife Justice Commission and the International Council of Environmental Law.

Summary of deliberations

6. Many speakers underlined the role of Crime Congresses as unique opportunities to join efforts on crime prevention and criminal justice in the context of broader global governance. In discussing the main theme of the Congress, they highlighted the role of multilateralism in crime prevention and criminal justice, including in addressing new, emerging and evolving crime trends in the digital age. The critical role of UNODC in conducting research, supporting normative development and providing technical assistance to further evidence-based crime prevention and criminal justice efforts was also underlined.

7. Many speakers expressed their delegations' full commitment to the Agenda 2030, especially Sustainable Development Goals 16 on "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" and 5 on "Gender Equality", and stressed that those were cornerstones of international efforts on crime prevention and criminal justice. They highlighted that the vulnerabilities of populations affected by poverty and exclusion and loopholes in the protection of the environment undermine the security and stability of States and the international community as a whole, and should be taken into account.

8. Some speakers also recalled the Pact for the Future and its relevance for the preparatory work towards the Crime Congress.

9. A number of speakers referred to efforts to reduce illicit financial flows and strengthen national capacities in the tracing, seizure, freezing, confiscation and recovery of proceeds of crime, highlighting that such efforts are cross-cutting in all crime prevention and criminal justice policies, destroy the business models of organized crime, cut offenders off from their financial resources, help in the investigation and prosecution of crime and eventually the compensation of the victims. The importance of effective follow-the-money investigations and the need to enhance transparency of corporate structures used to disguise illicit funds were underlined by these speakers. Some speakers also highlighted that asset recovery was a cross-cutting issue for the financing for development agenda and could support many aspects of sustainable development.

10. Many speakers highlighted the importance of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. They underlined the need to improve equal access to justice for all. They further mentioned the need to strengthen the protection of victims of crime, making reference to the 40th anniversary of the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, adopted at the 7th Crime Congress in Milan, Italy, in 1985. A number of speakers also highlighted the need to ensure that all crime prevention and criminal justice efforts were effective, fair and aligned with international human rights standards.

11. A number of speakers underlined the need to further gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They stressed that crime prevention and criminal justice efforts must be gender-sensitive and gender responsive, as well as take into account the specific needs of children and young people. They expressed concern about the continued high level of violence against women and girls in the region, both offline and online, and underlined the importance of eliminating such crimes by prosecuting perpetrators and providing effective services to victims.

12. Several speakers highlighted the central role of effective and efficient international cooperation in criminal matters. They underlined the need to develop joint investigation teams for complex cross-border cases. They also underlined the

need to innovate in national and international cooperation to ensure that investigative techniques and legal approaches could keep pace with the rapid development of crime trends. They also stressed the need to fully respect the rights and freedoms of individuals in the conduct of international cooperation in criminal matters.

13. Many speakers called for a whole-of-society approach to crime prevention and criminal justice that involved different governmental stakeholders as well as civil society organizations, local communities, academia and the private sector. Speakers underscored the vital role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in fostering innovation, inclusivity, and effective responses to crime. In this regard, the empowerment of women and young people as positive agents of change was also underlined.

14. A number of speakers underlined the need to adapt national legal frameworks to new crime trends with a view to fully addressing all kind of crimes. Particular mention was made of crimes that affect the environment, cybercrime, organized fraud, smuggling of migrants, violence against women and girls, corruption, as well as of a broad range of organized crime and money-laundering offences.

15. Some speakers addressed the growing threat of crimes that affect the environment, highlighting that they particularly affected vulnerable populations, contributed to environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity and undermined the stability of public institutions. They underlined that these crimes were mostly committed by organized crime groups and Member States would need to strengthen information exchange and international cooperation in this regard.

16. A number of speakers expressed concern on the increasing use of technologies by organized crime groups and made reference to the evolving methods of modern and sophisticated organized crime, including to the use of artificial intelligence, crypto assets and crypto communications by organized crime groups. Several speakers welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Convention on Cybercrime as an important step in the efforts to enhance global cooperation and effectively address technology-enabled crimes and urged Member States to sign and ratify it.

17. A number of speakers underscored the need to strengthen specialized investigative tools available to law enforcement agencies to detect and investigate crime and especially cybercrime. Speakers also highlighted the potential of modern technology to streamline legal processes and support access to justice, and stressed the importance of human rights safeguards in that context.

18. Several speakers emphasized the need to advance innovative and evidence-based solutions to address organized fraud, which was stressed as being one of the most prevalent crimes globally. The importance of awareness-raising and education in this regard was highlighted, as well as the need to strengthen capacity for investigation and prosecution of organized fraud online and offline.

19. Some speakers underlined the need to adopt innovative and effective approaches to countering organized crime. In this regard, administrative approaches were mentioned, whereby municipalities and other administrative authorities were empowered to disrupt criminal infiltration.

Outcome of deliberations

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

(a) Strengthen multilateral platforms on crime prevention and criminal justice efforts with a view to exchanging good practices and experience and joining forces in addressing recent crime trends;

(b) Enhance national capacities and international cooperation for the tracing, seizure, freezing, confiscation and recovery of proceeds of crime and realize the potential that tackling proceeds of crime has for the broader governance, security and development agenda;

- (c) In a spirit of inclusivity, ensure effective, accountable and transparent institutions and equal access to justice for all; promote social innovation, gender-responsive policies, programmes and legislation; and mainstream a human rights, gender and age perspective into all crime prevention and criminal justice efforts;
- (d) Strengthen efficient and human rights-based international cooperation in criminal matters, including extradition, mutual legal assistance, transfer of prisoners and law enforcement cooperation, including with a view to keeping pace with the rapid change of contemporary crime trends and technological developments;
- (e) Foster multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approaches in crime prevention and criminal justice that include civil society organizations, local communities, academia and the private sector;
- (f) Adapt crime prevention and criminal justice strategies as well as national legal frameworks with a view to fully addressing new crime trends and effectively preventing and countering all kind of crimes;
- (g) Strengthen national legislation to effectively address crimes that affect the environment and integrate environmental considerations to protect people and planet into crime prevention and criminal justice strategies;
- (h) Consider signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime;
- (i) Strengthen investigative tools available to law enforcement agencies to detect and investigate cybercrime;
- (j) Further explore the potential of digital technologies to advancing criminal justice systems, improving access to justice, and strengthening law enforcement responses, while safeguarding the full respect for human rights;
- (k) Advance innovative and evidence-based solutions to address organized fraud, including online scams, as one of the growing threats in the region;
- (l) Further explore administrative approaches to countering organized crime;
- (m) Collaborate with UNODC in its role to conduct research, support normative development and provide technical assistance on crime prevention and criminal justice.