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African Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Addis Ababa, 8–10 April 2025

Draft report

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Addendum

II. Recommendations – Agenda item 4

1. The Secretary of the Africa 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. She explained that, in order to facilitate the discussions at the regional preparatory meetings and the Congress itself, the discussion guide had clustered the agenda items that dealt with issues of broad and global importance together with the relevant workshop topics, on the understanding that the latter were designed to cover more specific topics and draw on practical experiences and approaches.
2. Presentations were delivered by representatives of the Secretariat introducing the main theme, substantive agenda items and workshop topics.
3. Statements were made by the representatives of South Africa, Egypt, Tunisia, Nigeria, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.
4. Statements were also made by the observers for Interpol and the African Union.
5. The observers for the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime also made statements.



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”

Summary of deliberations

6. During the discussions on the main theme of the Congress, many speakers addressed a wide range of pressing issues related to crime prevention, criminal justice, and the rule of law, with a particular focus on regional challenges. These included, but were not limited to, combating transnational organized crime, corruption, cybercrime, crimes that affect the environment, financial crimes, including money-laundering, drug-related crimes, terrorism, incitement to violence, hate crimes, human trafficking and migrant smuggling as well as trafficking in cultural property. Throughout the discussions, several speakers emphasized the interconnectedness of these challenges, underscoring the need for evidence-based, inclusive, and people-centred approaches to build resilient and effective criminal justice systems, taking into account traditional and community driven justice systems and in compliance with applicable international conventions.

7. Many speakers highlighted the critical relationship between the rule of law and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, as well as the African Agenda 2063.

8. Many speakers underlined that robust and resilient criminal justice systems were fundamental to promoting the rule of law and achieving sustainable development. In this context, the need to addressing the root causes of crime, including socioeconomic inequalities was highlighted. Several speakers also reaffirmed the importance of strengthening legal frameworks to ensure equitable access to justice and the protection of all human rights.

9. The transformative potential of technology in addressing crime was another key element highlighted, with some speakers acknowledging the dual nature of technology as both a tool for advancing criminal justice and a medium exploited by criminals, particularly in the context of cybercrime and online scams. A number of speakers highlighted online child sexual exploitation as a particular area of concern in the region. The need for capacity building and technical cooperation as well as the transfer of technology to developing countries, including in the areas of artificial intelligence, preserving electronic evidence and data analysis, was emphasized by several speakers.

10. A number of speakers welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime; Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes, encouraging Member States to early sign, ratify and implement the Convention to address cyberthreats. Emphasis was placed again in this context on ensuring that technological advancements were shared across the globe, while safeguarding human rights and privacy, and building capacity of law enforcement and legal systems to counteract cyber-enabled crimes effectively, based on the provisions of the Convention, and a call made for the constructive engagement in the negotiations related to the additional protocol of this convention, bearing in mind the need to address many cyber-enabled crimes, including offences related to terrorism, incitement to violence, hate crimes, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants, drug trafficking and trafficking in cultural property.

11. International, regional and South-South cooperation emerged as a recurring priority, including with calls to strengthen mutual legal assistance, extradition, and cross-border coordination to combat transnational organized crime. Some speakers

highlighted asset recovery as an important element of criminal justice and international cooperation in general, and of particular relevance to the region. Several speakers stressed the need for collective action to address illicit financial flows and corruption, recognizing that these issues undermined economic stability, governance, and social development. Some speakers also referred to the challenges posed by the spread of the foreign terrorist fighters phenomenon, and the interlinkage between terrorism and other forms of transnational organized crimes.

12. Many speakers addressed the growing threat of crimes that affect the environment, including wildlife trafficking, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and trafficking of hazardous waste. These crimes were recognized as significant contributors to organized criminal networks and environmental degradation. Discussions underscored the need for enhanced research, cross-border information exchange, and the integration of environmental considerations into crime prevention strategies. Some speakers expressed concerns that the challenges posed by the world drug problem persist and continue to evolve.

13. Many speakers highlighted the importance of inclusive justice systems that prioritized fairness, transparency, and access to justice for all, particularly for women, children and persons in vulnerable situations. Some speakers also highlighted the need on reducing reoffending and the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders into society as an important element of criminal justice interventions and welcomed the recent finalization of Model Strategies on Reducing Reoffending. Restorative Justice and non-custodial measures were highlighted as well as tools to be considered by Member States where appropriate to the national context. The Nelson Mandela Rules were noted as one of the relevant United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice in this context. Addressing the challenges of the rise in the crimes perpetrated by children was referred to by some speakers

14. Many speakers stressed the importance of investing in prevention to address the root causes of crime, such as poverty and social inequality, and to prioritize socioeconomic development, with a focus on women, youth and community engagement.

15. Some speakers underscored the critical role of CCPCJ in advancing global discussions on crime prevention and sustainable development and encouraged intensified cooperation with other functional commissions of ECOSOC. The role of the Commission in the follow-up to the Congress on its outcomes was highlighted. The important role of UNODC in delivering technical assistance and supporting capacity-building was also underlined.

Outcome of deliberations

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

(a) Strengthen the capacity of crime prevention and criminal justice systems to address global and regional challenges, including transnational organized crime, corruption, financial crimes, terrorism, incitement to violence, hate crimes, trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in cultural property, drug-related crimes, illicit trafficking of firearms, crimes that affect the environment, cybercrime, and other new and emerging forms of crime; Focus on building institutional resilience, and adopting evidence-based, people-centred and locally adapted policies ensuring access to justice for all;

(b) Make use of the transformative potential of digital technologies to address crime, improve access to justice, and strengthen law enforcement and criminal justice responses; Increase technical cooperation and capacity building and transfer of technology, including emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence tools, to strengthen digital forensics, the use and preservation of electronic evidence and to facilitate digital transformation in criminal justice as a whole. Invest in digital

infrastructure and support developing countries in this regard; address child sexual exploitation online, terrorism and online drug trafficking as matters of priority. Emphasize the responsible use of digital tools safeguarding rights and data protection in digital spaces; expand research and data sharing to keep pace with global technological trends and utilize international frameworks such as the new United Nations Convention against Cybercrime to enhance global cooperation to prevent and combat both cyber-dependant and cyber-enabled crimes;

(c) Integrate strategies that address crimes against the environment into law enforcement operations and legal systems, while also considering their connection to other forms of transnational organized crime; enhance research, data collection, and sharing of information on the climate-crime nexus to support actionable climate security policies and justice system preparedness; improve cross-border cooperation at the regional and global levels, the exchange of good practices, and ensure that systems are equipped to address vulnerabilities and mitigate the environmental impacts of crimes;

(d) Promote inclusive access to justice as a catalyst for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; give due consideration to the relevance of the 2030 Agenda and its goal 16 in the context of the overall theme of the Congress; recognize the need for socioeconomic development and for addressing the root causes of crime in achieving sustainable development and security; address the needs of women, children, youth and persons in vulnerable situations, and strengthen their resilience; empower youth through education and engagement to build a culture of lawfulness and innovation in crime prevention;

(e) Strengthen international, regional and South-South cooperation including in the areas of mutual legal assistance, extradition, and cross-border coordination to address and combat transnational organized crime; remove barriers to asset recovery; focus on reducing reoffending through rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and in this context make use of the new model strategies on reducing reoffending;

(f) Strengthen the role of CCPCJ as a platform for advancing global discussions on crime prevention and criminal justice and as the central forum for the implementation of the outcome of the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, such as establishing a follow-up mechanism within CCPCJ to allow for regular reporting on the implementation of congress outcomes through intersessional thematic discussions;

(g) Collaborate with UNODC to operationalize the outcomes of the Congress through technical assistance and capacity-building.
