



**Tenth
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on the Prevention of Crime
and the Treatment of Offenders
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Adoption of the report of the Congress

Draft report

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Addendum

**Chapter V. Consideration of agenda items in plenary meetings
and by sessional bodies and action taken thereon by the
Congress**

**A. Consideration, in plenary meetings, of the state of crime and criminal
justice worldwide**

1. In accordance with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 52/91 of 12 December 1997, the Secretary-General prepared an overview of the state of crime and criminal justice worldwide for presentation at the opening of the Tenth Congress. The Congress considered the report of the Secretary-General on this question (A/CONF.187/5) at its 2nd to 4th plenary meetings, on 10 and 11 April.
2. At the 2nd meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Mexico, Australia, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, the Philippines, Lebanon, Japan, Argentina, Chile and Colombia.
3. At the 3rd meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Spain, Oman, the Holy See, Belgium, Austria, Israel, Peru, Uganda, Qatar, Sierra Leone and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The observer for the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior also made a statement.
4. At the 4th meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Slovenia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Romania, Nigeria, Bolivia, Panama, Afghanistan and Venezuela. The observers for the Commonwealth of Independent States and the League of Arab States made statements.

Statements were also made by the observers for the International Scientific and Professional Advisory Council and the Naif Arab Academy for Security Sciences.

General discussion

5. The representative of the Centre for International Crime Prevention made an introductory statement in which he highlighted the different patterns of conventional and non-conventional crime in the major regions of the world, including corruption, organized crime, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings and money-laundering. He noted that the available data strengthened the criminological assertion of a correlation between poverty and lack of opportunities, and crime. Further, although reported crime had decreased during the 1990s in countries of western Europe and North America, the crime reported elsewhere had tended to increase. This had resulted in an increase in what could be termed a "security gap" between the developing and the developed countries. The data, however, showed that affluent States could also experience high crime rates, as a result of the greater availability of opportunities and goods.

6. The representative of the Centre for International Crime Prevention noted that the Centre had initiated a global study of trends in transnational organized crime. Initial results had suggested that the growth of organized crime was especially strong where there was a culture of lawlessness, as indicated by a poor perception of the independence of the judiciary, a perception of widespread corruption and a perception of poor police effectiveness. Further, there appeared to be a strong statistical correlation between the extent of organized crime and expected economic growth. The representative concluded by noting that those results suggested that criminal justice systems should become more international in outlook. Those working in the system should seek to reach out to their colleagues in other countries. He expressed the hope that the Tenth Congress would be known as the occasion on which the internationalization of criminal justice was truly initiated.

7. Many speakers reported on trends and developments in criminal activity in their respective countries, as well as on the most recent developments in legislation, criminal policy and law enforcement. In quantitative terms, it was emphasized that crime rates may increase or decrease, depending on specific social and economic circumstances. States which enjoyed political, economic and socio-cultural stability, might be characterized by relatively stable crime rates. States undergoing rapid development or major economic or political transition might in turn experience increases in crime rates. The speakers were almost unanimous in drawing attention not so much to quantitative changes in crime as to the changing characteristics of criminal activity.

8. Many speakers described local and national prevention, rehabilitation and victim-oriented programmes, and strongly advocated that more attention should be given to such programmes.

9. The main focus in most national statements was the new forms of organized transnational crime, and the speakers referred to a number of economic and political factors at the local, national and international levels that had increased the threat posed by those new forms of crime. In that respect, some negative effects of globalization were identified. According to some speakers, the globalization of markets might generate wealth while increasing inequality. The growing gap between affluent and disadvantaged countries encouraged migration, and receiving countries were often not prepared to guarantee rights to the newcomers. Movement of goods and persons across borders had increased

dramatically in recent years, and opportunities for criminal groups illegally to transport goods and persons had simultaneously increased. Transnational criminal groups were taking advantage of the lack of harmonization in the criminal justice systems and were exploiting their weaknesses. Among the concerns expressed was that the growth of transnational crime activity was accompanied by a corollary of illegal acts, such as corruption of officials and money-laundering.

Conclusions

10. The speakers emphasized the importance of developing policies at both the national and international levels. The fair and efficient management and administration of criminal justice, with due regard paid to human rights, were recognized as fundamental prerequisites for social and economic development.

11. High priority was given by the speakers to the social dimension of crime prevention through the active participation of communities within the framework of preventive strategies. Particular reference was made to the importance of strengthening educational programmes aimed at preventing juveniles from committing crime, and of addressing the problem of domestic violence and, in particular, violence against women.

12. The participants emphasized the need to give appropriate consideration to the interests and concerns of victims in the criminal justice system, and to explore the possibility of more widespread use of mediation and the principles of restorative justice.

13. Support was expressed for the appropriate development and wider use of non-custodial sanctions as a means of reducing prison overcrowding and of ensuring the easier reintegration of offenders into society.

14. The following calls for action were expressed:

(a) International cooperation should be strengthened, in particular to facilitate mutual legal assistance. Governments should seek to encourage the sharing of information, experiences and best practices in responding to crime at the regional and international levels;

(b) Governments should seek to review their preventive policies with a view to more closely involving civil society and assigning priority to the most vulnerable social groups, such as women and children. Governments were also urged to review their policy in respect of assistance and support to victims of crime, in compliance with internationally recognized human rights instruments.
