**Eleventh
United Nations Congress
on Crime Prevention and
Criminal Justice**

Bangkok, 18-25 April 2005

Report of Committee I on agenda items 6 and 7 and Workshops 1, 2 and 3

Addendum

Workshop 3. Strategies and Best Practices for Crime Prevention, in particular in relation to Urban Crime and Youth at Risk

Proceedings

1.   At its 10th and 11th meetings, on 23 April 2005, Committee I held a workshop on strategies and best practices for crime prevention, in particular in relation to urban crime and youth at risk. The workshop was organized in cooperation with the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime. The Committee had before it the following documents:

        (a)   Background paper on Workshop 3: Strategies and Best Practices for Crime Prevention, in particular in relation to Urban Crime and Youth at Risk (A/CONF.203/11);

        (b)   Discussion guide (A/CONF.203/PM.1 and Corr.1);

        (c)   Reports of the regional preparatory meetings for the Eleventh Congress (A/CONF.203/RPM.1/1, A/CONF.203/RPM.2/1, A/CONF.203/RPM.3/1 and Corr.1 and A/CONF.203/RPM.4/1).

2.   At the 10th meeting, the Chairman made an introductory statement with particular reference to the progress made since the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of the Guidelines for cooperation and Technical Assistance in the Field of Urban Crime Prevention (Council resolution 1995/9, annex) and the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Vienna in 2000. He noted that a high point was the adoption of the Guidelines on the Prevention of Crime (Council resolution 2002/13), which laid out the principles for effective strategies and practice. He also noted that although the overall level of knowledge and best practices had increased, effective implementation often remained problematic. He emphasized the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies, to convince relevant

stakeholders at all levels to adopt a balanced approach to crime prevention, and to ensure that the principles of crime prevention were firmly embedded in legislation and management and organizational structures. In conclusion, he stated that best practices that were recognized as successful in preventing and reducing crime took into account the special needs of minority populations and vulnerable groups, as well as the larger social, political and economic factors.

3.   The workshop consisted of 6 panels, during which 19 presentations were made. At the outset, the various topics of the workshop were introduced. The morning meeting of the workshop considered strategies and practices in relation to urban crime, while the afternoon meeting focused on strategies aimed at youth at risk of crime and victimization and those already in conflict with the law.

4.   The Australian Minister for Justice and Customs addressed the Committee at its 10th meeting. He underscored the importance of global and local level partnerships in crime prevention, with a special focus on local implications of transnational organized crime. Noting that the majority of juveniles admitted to prison in Australia had experienced drugs, he stressed the link between drugs and crime and the importance of coordinated and evidence-based crime prevention programmes to tackle multiple risks.

5.   At the 10th meeting, statements were made by the representatives of El Salvador, Italy, Sweden, Oman, Finland, France, Argentina, Morocco, the United States of America and Samoa. At the 11th meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the United States, Indonesia and Egypt. Statements were made by the observers for Defence for Children International and the American Society of Criminology.

General discussion

6.   The first introductory presentation referred to the urgency of the need to respond to issues of urban crime and youth at risk and noted that, in many countries, the intensification of urbanization, the lack of infrastructure and access to services or income, and increasing income disparities, had contributed to a breakdown of traditional family, social and cultural networks and support. Levels of crime, violence and insecurity in urban areas, especially in developing countries, had risen, often facilitated by illicit drugs and guns and the local manifestations of organized crime and trafficking in persons. Many urban areas contained high proportions of children and youth living in unstable and poor environments, which put them at high risk of crime and victimization. Many of those children were trafficked persons, or traffickers in small arms and drugs, while others became both perpetrators and victims of the ensuing violence. People living in urban areas, especially youth, were highly vulnerable and a ready source of recruitment for transnational organized crime. The links between local and transnational crime were evident.

7.   The second introductory presentation stressed the challenges of urban crime prevention and its links to urban development and governance at the international, national and local levels, based on the experiences of the Safer Cities Programme, which implemented the coordinated strategic approach to crime prevention outlined in the Guidelines on the Prevention of Crime. Referring to the dramatic increase in marginalized neighbourhoods in large cities, which was associated with the rise of crime and insecurity, the need for concrete action by the relevant entities was

stressed. In that respect, it was noted that the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime had established close cooperation in formulating and implementing joint projects on crime prevention in urban areas.

8.   The first panel presented three crime prevention initiatives, from Belgium, Chile and Peru, showing how Governments with very different political, economic and social histories and contexts had supported action to prevent crime. Panellists discussed the involvement of local governments and the integration of community participatory action through a variety of mechanisms. The panellists focused on the achievements and challenges of the various initiatives by reporting increased awareness and confidence of citizens in the police, improved social cohesion, more comprehensive crime prevention programmes and, in one case, a drastic reduction in the incidence of street crime. While there was no doubt about the success of selected components of the projects, the panellists indicated some challenges, including weak political support, difficulty in empowering citizens, lack of resources and the challenge of applying an international model to a local context.

9.   The second panel presented demonstrations of long-term sustained and effective partnerships at the local level, supported by national Governments. In the case of the Safer Cities Programme in Dar es Salaam, the project had been successful despite the challenges and was ready to be replicated in other cities. The development of community-level policing in local communities in the Philippines, including a case study, focused on the decentralization of policing and building of trust. The balanced and multi-pronged series of strategies and interventions in Diadema, Brazil, had successfully reduced urban violence and the homicide rate by 65 per cent in five years.

10.   The third panel focused on the challenges of developing focused strategies that were socially inclusive. The exceptional urban renewal strategies being rolled out in the eThekwini municipality in Durban, South Africa, combined very careful community consultation with redevelopment, thus fostering healthy environments, employment, tourism and a decrease in crime. The panel also showcased the experience of strengthening community capacity in the municipality of Antananarivo, Madagascar.

11.   The fourth panel was devoted to youth at risk. It showcased integrated youth policies in England and Wales, which provided a framework for crime prevention for youth at risk and those in conflict with the law, from early childhood up to the age of 19 years, with specific targeted prevention projects providing support and tackling the risk factors for youth most at risk. An early intervention project in Queensland, Australia, was also presented to demonstrate how carefully implemented and evaluated interventions, based on good knowledge and effective models, could be used in the development of children and families to increase their protection and reduce the risks of future crime and victimization. The panel also presented the draft national policy on child justice administration of Nigeria, which demonstrated how prevention could be built into legislation in order to change attitudes and establish standards; it also showed how informal policing, human rights and inclusionary approaches could be encouraged in local communities.

12.   The panel on projects targeting specific groups at risk illustrated the importance of the inclusion and participation of young people in the development of

interventions. It reviewed the strategic approach being developed in the Czech Republic to respond to the trafficking in and sexual exploitation of youth, especially young women. The main aim of the initiative was to create coalitions against trafficking with the objective of protecting potential victims and youth at risk in general. The involvement of non-governmental organizations was necessary, since they were key partners in identifying victims who would not turn to state agencies for help. A youth gang prevention and reintegration project being developed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was also presented to show some challenging evidence of the importance and value of interventions aimed at children in gangs involved in armed conflict. An international study on children and youth participating in organized armed violence illustrated the emerging phenomenon of conflicts between juvenile gangs involved in trafficking in drugs at the local and transnational level. In Cambodia and Viet Nam, the House for Youth project had been expanding its supportive and training resources to street children and, increasingly, those who had been trafficked.

13. The last panel presented the toolkit developed by UN-Habitat and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa, in order to disseminate best practices and transferable models for crime prevention initiatives. Examples of training in crime prevention and regional and city-to-city exchanges, based on the experience of the Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, were also discussed, followed by examples of technical assistance involving projects for capacity-building, with particular reference to the South-South project of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

14. During the workshop, the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime launched its new "Compendium of Promising Strategies and Programmes" on urban crime prevention and youth at risk, which underlined the extent to which integrated crime prevention was becoming established and embedded across all the regions, thereby reaffirming the principle of sustainability of crime prevention, as expressed in the Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/13, annex).

15. Several speakers stressed that strategies to deal with violence between juvenile gangs should not be limited to law-enforcement measures, but should also include the promotion of a social environment to facilitate the prevention of juvenile violence. An example of international cooperation was the Secure Central America Plan, which included a comprehensive strategy to prevent violent urban crime committed by youth gangs and to assist youth at risk.

16. Several speakers analysed the concept of youth at risk and in particular stressed that, while street children, juveniles in conflict with the law and members of gangs were often considered as a "lost cause" by public authorities, they were in fact at risk of being further marginalized and subject to sexual exploitation, human trafficking, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. It was also emphasized that minor acts of violence or involvement in petty offences, "uncivil behaviour" such as bullying or vandalism, were often the growing ground for involvement in more serious offending or victimization.

17. The importance of monitoring and long-term evaluation of crime prevention programmes in order to ensure a proper assessment of the results, especially with regard to their cost-effectiveness and sustainability, was stressed by many

participants. This included building longitudinal knowledge and evidence-based follow-up action. Successful methods of evaluation included self-evaluation, assessment of the level of satisfaction of beneficiaries and replication of victim surveys.

18. Many speakers referred to restorative justice processes as a necessary component of their crime prevention strategies. The importance of community-based crime prevention initiatives was also stressed. In one country, elderly or disabled persons had been given the possibility to report offences from their residence and an online reporting system for minor offences had been created. Others provided examples of crime prevention initiatives involving restructuring, refocusing and retraining of law enforcement personnel. In particular, proximity policing had been established in several countries to bring the police closer to citizens and to promote a cooperative approach in order to reduce crime and increase feelings of security.

Conclusions and recommendations

19. The workshop highlighted the strengths of crime prevention and that a major part of the international effort must lie with national and local authorities and communities in preventing the spread of everyday crime and violence. There was a major role for well-planned prevention at the local level. This presented a major challenge to which international, national, subregional and local governments must respond.

20. An increasing number of States were developing and applying viable, effective strategies to reduce crime and insecurity and promote community safety in urban areas and among youth at risk, in line with the United Nations crime prevention instruments, including the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2) and the Millennium Development Goals contained therein, the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century (Assembly resolution 55/59, annex) and the Guidelines on the Prevention of Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/13, annex).

21. The workshop recommended that Member States consider the following:

(a) Adopting and implementing the Guidelines on the Prevention of Crime and international standards and norms concerning the rights of young people;

(b) Establishing comprehensive strategies and policies to enable and support the development of policies related to urban crime prevention and youth at risk at the local government level;

(c) Empowering local authorities to establish integrated, strategic approaches to crime prevention, paying particular attention to youth at risk. This would require local authorities to take the lead and to work in a multi-sectoral manner, including local services and local administration, as well as with local community groups, non-governmental organizations, the media, the private sector and civil society;

(d) Formulating context-sensitive strategies focusing on the inclusion, rather than the exclusion, of youth at risk, including ethnic and cultural minorities and young men and women, and promoting and encouraging their active participation in decision-making in matters affecting them;

(e)   Developing gender sensitive strategies, including specific provision for and targeting of particular groups of youth at risk. This would include those in the poorest urban areas, street children, those in youth gangs, sexually exploited youth and those affected by substance abuse, war, natural disasters or HIV/AIDS;

(f)   Formulating strategies and implementing specific plans to promote community alternatives to custody and support for those released from custody, using restorative approaches that would focus on building individual and community capacities to resolve conflicts before they escalate;

(g)   Developing interventions targeted at the most at-risk groups and areas, using, as far as possible, good practices and evidence-based approaches that would be adapted or developed in relation to the local context, needs and realities. In doing so, national, subregional and local governments would help to strengthen the factors that protect the most vulnerable, including women and children, and limit the facilitating environment for transnational crime;

(h)   Implementing policies with a monitoring and evaluation component, in terms of process and outcomes, to facilitate the adaptation and broader application of cost-effective and sustainable best practices and evidence-based knowledge. This would require greater attention to the development of tools, such as indicators for evaluation, and to assisting diagnosis and strategic planning.

22.   The workshop recommended that the international community, including donors, consider facilitating and supporting the development of capacity-building at the national and local government level, for example, through city-to-city exchanges, as well as technical assistance and training, paying special attention to transferable experience among developing countries, with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UN-Habitat.

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