



Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

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Draft report

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Addendum

Integrated approaches to challenges facing the criminal justice system

Proceedings

1. At its 10th and 11th plenary meetings, on 10 March 2021, the Congress considered agenda item 4, entitled “Integrated approaches to challenges facing the criminal justice system”. For its consideration of the item, the Congress had before it the following documents:

(a) Working paper prepared by the Secretariat on integrated approaches to challenges facing the criminal justice system ([A/CONF.234/5](#));

(b) Working paper prepared by the Secretariat on developments regarding crime prevention and criminal justice as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic ([A/CONF.234/15](#));

(c) Discussion guide for the Fourteenth Congress ([A/CONF.234/PM.1](#)).

2. The 10th plenary meeting was chaired by Alessandro Cortese (Italy). A representative of the Secretariat introduced the agenda item, and a summary of the conclusions of workshop 2, on the topic “Reducing reoffending: identifying risks and developing solutions”, was presented by the moderator of that workshop. Statements were made by the representatives of Japan, Canada, China, Thailand, the United States, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Argentina, Colombia, South Africa, Morocco, Armenia, Finland and Honduras. Statements were also made by the observers for Dominicans for Justice and Peace and the International Drug Policy Consortium.

3. The 11th plenary meeting was chaired by Robinson Njeru Githae (Kenya). A statement was made by the representative of Mexico. A statement was also made by the observer for the International Association of Lawyers.

General discussion

4. Several speakers emphasized that, in order to successfully address the emerging and complex challenges faced by national criminal justice systems, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to successfully achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it was crucial for the various actors of the criminal justice chain to adopt a collaborative and integrated approach. It was stressed that such integration should build upon a culture of collaboration, an effective information-sharing system and



comprehensive and holistic coordination involving all the different parts of the criminal justice chain. Reference was made by several speakers to ways and means of fostering such an integrated approach, including facilitating dialogue and collaboration among relevant criminal justice agencies, providing training and capacity-building activities, establishing task forces and promoting – as professionals within all sectors of the criminal justice system – the participation of women, minorities and members of other marginalized groups.

5. A number of speakers recognized the importance of establishing a collaborative relationship between the criminal justice system and other relevant sectors of society. Several speakers presented national examples of specific collaborative initiatives between the criminal justice system and other sectors of society, including the private sector, non-profit organizations and communities, including through community-based volunteerism. Specific mention was made in that regard of national partnerships to foster the reintegration of parolees and probationers into their communities and to reduce reoffending. The importance of comprehensive and coordinated action was noted.

6. Several speakers shared information on national legislative and institutional reforms, including the revision of relevant legislation, the modernization of criminal justice agencies and the establishment of new public bodies, aimed at more integration within the criminal justice system and more effectiveness in the delivery of justice. Examples were provided of innovative national approaches, such as the establishment of rapid-deployment itinerant units that could arrive promptly at crime scenes, which were improving the response to the serious and complex challenges posed by criminality, in particular in the most remote areas of the national territory.

7. Several speakers reaffirmed the importance of addressing gender-based violence, particularly in the light of the increase in domestic violence reported during the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlighted measures taken at the national level to prevent and respond to that type of violence. Some speakers highlighted the importance of providing victims of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, with prompt access to justice and support services, including through the provision of accurate legal advice and information. The importance of linking the criminal justice system to providers of health, education, and other social services was emphasized as an important factor in ensuring that responses to gender-based violence were more efficient, effective and survivor-centred.

8. Several speakers shared national experiences in tackling violence against children, stressing that coordination between different parts of the criminal justice system was a key factor in delivering justice for children, both in situations in which children were involved as offenders and in situations in which they were involved as victims. Some speakers focused on measures taken at the national level to provide children who had become victims of violence with comprehensive and coordinated support that involved different types of services, such as medical, social and legal services, while minimizing the impact of trauma on children. Other speakers reported on national experiences in dealing with children in contact with the law. Collaboration between criminal justice agencies and social services was described as critical in that regard.

9. Several speakers noted the importance of providing support and protection for victims of crime. National experiences were shared of criminal justice systems that incorporated victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches. Several speakers mentioned types of support that should be provided to victims, namely increased access to legal aid and information, particularly for victims of sexual violence, restorative justice programmes and reparation mechanisms, for instance through legislation enabling victims to seek compensation from the State.

10. Several speakers noted the value and benefits of restorative justice programmes. It was noted that providing restorative justice at relevant stages of criminal justice proceedings could promote offender rehabilitation and victim support. Its impact on reducing reoffending and its potential to reduce overcrowding in prisons were

recalled. Reference was also made to the importance of using restorative justice programmes in cases involving children.

11. Some speakers noted that overcrowding in prisons remained a challenge. Many speakers noted that there was a need to increase the use of alternatives to imprisonment. Some speakers reported on national measures to address overcrowding in prisons, including working with the judiciary to enhance the use of non-custodial measures, amending relevant legislation and adopting a comprehensive strategy on probation. It was recalled that 2020 had marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) and that the number of women incarcerated around the world was higher than ever. The urgent need to release those behind bars for minor drug-related offences, especially those in vulnerable situations, such as pregnant women, was mentioned.

12. Many speakers highlighted the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and shared national experiences in that regard. Several speakers noted the need for a multi-stakeholder approach in that effort, involving not only those within the criminal justice system but also those outside of it, such as in the health, education and social welfare sectors. It was said that former offenders had a diverse range of needs and that the community had an important role to play in successfully reintegrating offenders. Several speakers noted the need for practical guidance for national criminal justice systems on reducing reoffending. Some speakers, while underlining that the need to address the problem of reoffending was increasingly recognized at the international level, recommended the development of new United Nations standards and norms focused on the issue of reducing reoffending.

13. Some speakers stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation, at both the regional and international levels, as a way of responding in a more effective and integrated manner to the increasing challenges faced by national criminal justice systems. In that regard, reference was made by some speakers to initiatives taken by their countries to foster and strengthen international cooperation to address challenges posed by transnational organized crime, such as trafficking in persons, drug trafficking and money-laundering, including new and emerging forms of crimes.
