



Twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

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Draft report

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Addendum

Consideration of agenda items in plenary meetings and by sessional bodies and action taken by the Congress

B. Workshop 3. Practical Approaches to Preventing Urban Crime

Proceedings

1. At its 5th and 6th plenary meetings, on 14 April 2010, the Congress held the Workshop on Practical Approaches to Preventing Urban Crime. The Workshop was organized by the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of Brazil and UNODC. The Workshop had before it the following documents:

(a) Discussion guide (A/CONF.213/PM.1);

(b) Reports of the regional preparatory meetings for the Twelfth Congress (A/CONF.213/RPM.1/1, A/CONF.213/RPM.2/1, A/CONF.213/RPM.3/1 and A/CONF.213/RPM.4/1);

(c) Background paper on the Workshop on Practical Approaches to Preventing Urban Crime (A/CONF.213/14).

2. At the 5th meeting, the presiding officer, Mr. Romeu Tuma Júnior, Secretary of Justice of Brazil, made an introductory statement underlining the progress made since the adoption of the Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/13, annex) and the holding of the Eleventh Congress, in 2005. He noted that, despite the advances made in recent years, efforts needed to be strengthened to balance the attention and resources devoted to crime prevention with those devoted to criminal justice. He referred to the challenges posed by the growing number of mega-cities and urban agglomerations with large proportions of socially and economically excluded persons. Women, children, young



people, migrant populations and refugees were especially vulnerable to crime. He noted that too often official responses to crime and to excluded and marginalized persons had been reactive. He stressed that such responses, while bringing short-term relief, did not provide long-term, sustainable solutions. In conclusion, strategies and practices that were recognized as being successful in preventing and reducing crime were engaging strategically with communities, engaging vulnerable groups and minority populations and respecting human rights and the rule of law.

3. In his statement, the Secretary of Justice of Brazil noted that the Government of Brazil was aware of the obstacles that violence and criminality posed to the social and economic development of individuals, communities, cities and countries. Recognizing the links between chaotic urbanization and criminality, he stressed the urgent need to promote a culture of peace as a fundamental aspect of all policies for crime prevention in mega-cities.

4. The Workshop consisted of six panels, during which 18 presentations were made. At the 5th meeting, strategies and practices for crime prevention in mega-cities and regions, high crime-rate cities and the role of government were considered. At the 6th meeting, the Workshop focused on responses to social exclusion and migration, and new tools and techniques to support crime prevention, and concluded with the discussion of the recommendations of the Workshop.

5. At the 5th meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Nigeria, Morocco, Algeria and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. At the 6th meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Canada, the United States of America, Nigeria, China, the Russian Federation, Uganda and Algeria.

General discussion

6. The first panel, on mega-cities and regions, presented crime prevention initiatives from São Paulo, Brazil, Lagos, Nigeria, and Cairo. Panellists discussed how the speed and size of city growth impacted on prevention strategies and practices and affected issues of governance. Homicide rate-mapping in São Paulo, for example, had shown that the highest crime rates were found in low-income and peripheral areas, with a disproportionate impact on blacks and youth. That information had been used in formulating policies concerning public spaces, which were combined with multidisciplinary and multisectoral interventions, including improving the capacities of community and investigative police. While a substantial reduction in homicide rates had followed, victimization patterns linked to urban inequalities continued to persist. Addressing that challenge required city-wide safety and security initiatives.

7. In Lagos, the Security Trust Fund of the Government of the state of Lagos had been established to provide support for under-resourced federal security agencies. A crime and safety survey had underlined the fact that policies to address the deficit in law enforcement resources had improved the capacities of law enforcement agencies in the state of Lagos. In the case of Cairo, generally low crime rates were attributed to community surveillance and socio-cultural norms. However, crime types and rates were area-specific, and authorities had identified crime hot spots, which were often urban spaces that a particular combination of urban features had made unsafe. Panellists also reported on the results of policies that entailed close collaboration

between various entities including local government and non-state actors. They highlighted the role of good governance, job creation and community participation in crime prevention and the need to address social segregation, marginalization and exclusion.

8. The second panel, on cities with high crime rates, commenced with a presentation by UNODC on police-reported, intentional homicides in countries and in their largest cities, using data provided by Member States to the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems. Urbanization was considered to increase both crime-risk factors and protective factors reducing crime. It was emphasized that the results of crime victimization surveys could help optimize protective factors by providing invaluable data to inform urban management, social cohesion policies and practices, and the work of law enforcement agencies. City strategies in Port of Spain and in Medellín, Colombia, were also described by the panel. In Port of Spain, there had been a dramatic increase in serious crimes, particularly homicides, in recent years. In response, a multisectoral crime prevention initiative was established, drawing on the results of a community safety assessment. In the case of Medellín, interventions had focused on deprived areas. Collaborative work involving the population and local authorities had addressed social inclusion, social housing and development. Such participatory mechanisms had increased the capacity of communities to resist subordination to illegal groups and criminal organizations.

9. The third panel, on the role of Governments in prevention, presented the experience of the National Programme for Public Security with Citizenship (PRONASCI) of Brazil, a comprehensive programme with structural actions for strengthening the criminal justice system, and local programmes for socio-economic development and good citizenship targeting young people. In addition, a youth vulnerability index had been developed in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, the Brazilian Forum on Public Security and ILANUD. One of the findings of the index was that young persons between 19 and 24 years of age were at particular risk of lethal violence.

10. The fourth panel, on the inclusion of women and youth, examined the social inclusion of women and youth in strategies and programmes to prevent crime. It was shown that cities could be places of specific forms of insecurity and violence against women, thus requiring gender inclusion to be made a key component of urban planning. The panel also discussed experiences concerning the prevention of violence against women and children in post-conflict settings. It was stressed that a greater presence of women in police services was important to helping countries recovering from conflict better protect women and children from violence and abuse. The panel also presented a youth inclusion programme based on five pillars of support to young people: education, citizenship, sports, job creation and training opportunities. A further project described by panellists was the "Peace Squares" project of the Sou da Paz Institute, created to address the lack of public spaces for culture, leisure and socialization. The project engaged the community in recovering abandoned public spaces, which were revitalized and made safe public spaces used and managed by local residents.

11. The fifth panel, on the integration of migrant communities, presented the experiences of integrating migrant youth and communities in Montreal. A new police approach had been developed and implemented in areas of Montreal affected

by a range of social problems associated with a multi-ethnic community and drug trafficking. The new approach, which balanced repressive and preventive crime measures, had brought the police closer to communities, yielding positive results. One panellist described outreach work and practices focusing on spaces, rather than on certain population groups, in order to prevent urban crime in Italy. The project brought about changes in public spaces by working with vulnerable groups including migrant populations, sex workers and potential victims of human trafficking. Social mediation was also used to prevent discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

12. The sixth panel, on new tools to support the application of crime prevention, focused on crime and violence observatories, assessment tools and manuals, online resources and safety audits. A presentation was made on tools to assist in the collection of data and the sharing of information required to inform evidence-based crime prevention policies and interventions. It also presented the UNODC crime prevention assessment tool, which provided guidance on technical assistance needs for crime prevention. Finally, panellists discussed training and capacity-building, including ongoing efforts in Brazil to strengthen the skills and professionalism of police officers through education on technical skills and on the protection and promotion of human rights relevant to law enforcement work. In particular, the training provided law enforcement officers with the knowledge and skills to deal with vulnerable groups such as children and elderly persons.

13. Some speakers addressed the impact of migration from rural to urban areas, including in the context of the world economic crisis and its impact on crime. They noted that investment in rural areas, as well as in cities, was important to achieve an equitable distribution of resources and to create opportunities in both rural and urban areas. Another speaker stressed the need for governments to engage in sound urban planning that took careful account of crime prevention and law enforcement principles. Governments alone could not succeed in combating crime; businesses also needed to invest in crime prevention. He posed the question of how police services could adapt in the light of the increasing privatization of security and law enforcement functions.

14. One speaker stressed the need for full respect for human rights in the prevention of crime. He highlighted the importance of focusing on the root causes of crime and the need for synergy between the work of the judiciary, municipalities, law enforcement agencies and social development actors in the area of crime prevention. In some contexts, drug consumption and drug trafficking were drivers of crime against women and children. Social development plans and activities thus required the full involvement of women.

15. One speaker referred to the need to consider different strategies for addressing domestic and transnational manifestations of human trafficking, including through cooperation and the sharing of information between countries. Another speaker reported on the increase in drug-related violence in his country and the development of a programme aimed at preventing gang membership. He added that his country had developed a range of cross-cutting strategies addressing the concerns of minorities and women. He also stressed the need for evidence-based interventions and noted that a national crime prevention centre in his country had developed tools, including training materials on crime prevention, to assist in that task.

16. Some speakers referred to the importance of community-based policing as a model for identifying and addressing local threats. One speaker observed that the ethnic composition of police services should reflect that of local communities. Another speaker noted that community policing in his country assisted in reconciliation between the families of victims and offenders, prevented children of school age from becoming involved in crime and assisted with the social reintegration of former offenders. He added that poverty was a factor greatly contributing to crime and that microfinancing schemes were an important tool for organizing people into groups, raising economic standards and thereby preventing crime.

17. One speaker noted that governments should not allow the formation of “communities within communities”, which were impenetrable to law enforcement officials. He encouraged Member States to prevent social isolation. There was a need to share information and address multiple challenges at the same time, including corruption, violent crime and trafficking in persons. One speaker stressed that crime prevention should be a component of urban planning, including through processes such as expedited house registration. Another important aspect was the provision of registration, employment and health-care services for migrant populations, as was ensuring the social reintegration of ex-offenders in order to reduce recidivism.

18. One speaker noted the importance of coordination between different police units and the need for ongoing monitoring of crime trends. In her country, crime rates had decreased by approximately 30 per cent as a result of the prioritization of crime prevention measures, social and economic policies to mitigate the effects of the financial crisis, strengthened engagement with civil society and improved technical resources for maintaining public order. Capacity-building in crime prevention had also been given greater attention. She noted that it was important to increase the analytical capacity of law enforcement authorities.

19. Some speakers noted the importance of the international exchange of good practices in crime prevention, and one speaker requested UNODC to facilitate such an exchange between Member States. In response to a question, one speaker clarified that in countries where violence could reach extreme levels, it was appropriate to characterize violence as a public health issue, rather than as an issue of criminal justice.

Conclusions and recommendations

20. The Workshop on Practical Approaches to Preventing Urban Crime highlighted that cities and urban environments were not in themselves causes of crime. Rather, while such environments could certainly pose risk factors for crime, they also provided opportunities for protective factors reducing crime, such as employment and education. Urban planning played an important role in that respect, with many States reporting on detailed analyses of urban landscape features identified as facilitating or providing protection from crime.

21. The Workshop highlighted that a strong focus on crime prevention, rather than reactive or repressive law enforcement approaches, was required to ensure that risk factors did not outweigh protective factors. Effective urban crime prevention strategies should address the needs of the entire city population, including migrants,

women, youth, children and low-income populations, in order to prevent a situation in which pockets of security existed within an otherwise insecure city. Urban crime prevention programmes should also address income inequality, unemployment and social exclusion so as to target many of the root causes of crime. The Workshop also considered that it was important for programmes not to focus exclusively on urban areas but to also encompass rural development in order to reduce the rapid rate of urbanization, which was recognized as a significant risk factor for crime.

22. All urban crime prevention programmes should use a multisectoral participatory approach driven by the needs and concerns of communities affected by crime. In that respect, diagnostic tools such as local safety audits, vulnerability indicators and crime victimization surveys were key to obtaining baseline and ongoing information on the nature and extent of crime challenges and local concerns. Law enforcement officers, who constituted the front line in the State response to crime, should receive comprehensive training on community engagement, human rights, mediation and crime prevention education and awareness-raising.

23. The Workshop made the following recommendations:

(a) Governments should give priority to urban crime prevention in view of the robust evidence that criminal justice responses alone are not sufficient to prevent crime and violence;

(b) Crime prevention policies, strategies and programmes should be knowledge-based and multisectoral and involve not only the security and justice sectors but also other key government sectors engaged in social and economic development, as well as civil society;

(c) Crime prevention policies and programmes should address the socio-economic and political factors associated with increased vulnerability to crime and victimization;

(d) Mega-cities should be encouraged to develop their metropolitan and regional structures in an integrated way in order to tackle infrastructure, housing, transport and other social and economic problems that may facilitate crime and violence, including by developing and training municipal police services that work on problem-solving with local communities;

(e) All levels of government should be encouraged to place greater emphasis on ensuring the safety of women in private and public settings. That requires gender-mainstreaming in all government departments and areas of responsibility, as well as in the collection and analysis of data related to the provision of services. Cities are encouraged to develop strategic plans to change attitudes towards violence against women in all settings, to encourage the participation of women in decision-making and to provide services for victims of such violence;

(f) Cities should give greater attention to the redevelopment of public space with a view to creating safe and accessible places for interaction and recreation and to promoting civility;

(g) Cities should be encouraged to promote and utilize innovative participatory and inclusive policies and programmes, in order to reduce the exclusion of marginalized groups, including minorities and migrants. Support

should also be given to civil society organizations working to promote the greater inclusion of marginalized groups;

(h) All levels of government should be encouraged to develop and implement effective and gender-sensitive crime prevention strategies, including by utilizing urban and regional observatories for the collection and analysis of data, geographic mapping techniques, victimization surveys and safety audits and guides;

(i) All levels of government should be urged to support emerging and innovative training and teaching approaches in crime prevention that respond to the needs of the police and other professions engaged in the area of prevention. Those approaches include e-learning and professional and technical courses;

(j) The international community, including donors, should work to facilitate and support local government capacity-building through training and technical assistance and city-to-city exchanges, taking into account of the individual needs of countries.