



ELEVENTH UN CONGRESS ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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UN SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR UNIVERSAL RATIFICATION OF TREATIES ON CORRUPTION, TERRORISM, ORGANIZED CRIME

Following is the text of the message by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, delivered today in Bangkok by Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director, UN Office on Drugs and Crime:

Organized crime is a leading threat to international peace and security in the twenty-first century. This United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice should serve as a reminder of how much more we need to do to tackle that threat.

In recent years, with the adoption or entry into force of several major conventions and protocols, the United Nations has made important progress in building a framework of international standards and norms for the fight against organized crime and corruption. However, many of the States parties to these treaties have not implemented them adequately, sometimes because they genuinely lack the capacity to do so. In my report to Member States ahead of the United Nations summit in September, I call on all States to ratify and implement these conventions, while helping one another to strengthen their domestic criminal justice and rule-of-law systems. I also urge them to give adequate resources to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its key role in overseeing implementation of the conventions.

Our global strategy must include universal ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, the Convention against Corruption, and the 12 universal counter-terrorism instruments, with a view to ultimately achieving universal adherence and full compliance with these instruments. Yet again, I appeal to States to take advantage of the Special Treaty Event during the high-level segment of this Congress, and the Treaty Event that will be held during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly to deposit instruments of ratification or accession.

Promoting the rule of law must include robust capacity-building mechanisms for rule-of-law assistance to post-conflict societies, where organized crime, and its links to large-scale corruption, are major impediments to reconstruction. That is why I intend to create a dedicated Rule of Law Assistance Unit, which will help national efforts to re-establish the rule of law in societies emerging from instability and war.

This Congress is an opportunity for the international community to stand firmly united against the threats of crime -- ensuring that those threats that are distant do not become imminent, and those that are imminent do not actually become destructive. In that spirit, I wish you a most productive Congress.

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