



ELEVENTH UN CONGRESS ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Bangkok, Thailand 18-25 April 2005



23 April 2005

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

At the opening of the High-Level Segment of the UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice today, Member States focussed on a range of issues, including terrorism, money-laundering, corruption and trafficking in human beings.

In his opening address, Antonio Maria Costa, Secretary-General of the Congress and Executive Director, United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime*, said that, during the week, the Crime Congress had turned Bangkok into the world capital in the fight against crime. He said it was time to wake up to the plight of the poor, homeless and street children trafficked for sex and exploited as forced labour. World leaders must be convinced that real power was not only measured by military might or political muscle, but also by the protection and liberties extended to all citizens. He said he would not want to see a Bangkok Declaration long on language and short on ideas. He also said that should there be a decision to launch negotiations on a new computer-related instrument, UNODC stood ready to assist Member States.

Chidchai Vanasatidya, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, said, in order to prevent crime, the root cause of the problem -- poverty -- had to be eradicated. He said his country had declared war on narcotic drugs, poverty and corruption and reiterated the importance his country had attached to the four pillars of the Congress: sustainable development, drug eradication, restorative justice and trafficking in human beings.

Akinlolu Olujinimi, Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of Nigeria, speaking on behalf of the African Union, said the Union recognized that transnational organized crime severely hampered sustainable socio-economic development. The ratification and implementation of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three Protocols was central to combating organized crime.

Speaking in his national capacity, he said the international community must rise to the aid of countries with limited capacity and resources to prosecute organized crime. There was a need for better cooperation and support of the United Nations and the international community for the recovery of national assets stashed away in foreign banks by corrupt politicians. He also felt that the single best strategy for weakening transnational organized crime gangs was to eliminate their ability to launder proceeds of crime. Baroness Scotland, Home Office Minister of Criminal Justice, United Kingdom, added that one of the strongest weapons in the fight against transnational organized crime and terrorism was disrupting the funding of those groups.

Hamid Awaluddin, Minister for Law and Human Rights of Indonesia, said that his delegation believed that the General Assembly needed to negotiate and endorse a comprehensive international convention on money-laundering and the UN should provide leadership in response to threats posed by international crime.

(more)

Luc Frieden, Minister of Justice of Luxembourg, speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), said that the EU was promoting compliance with recognized international standards, notably in the fight against organized crime, cybercrime, corruption, money-laundering and terrorist financing. He said the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme should make optimum use of its limited sources, and not perform tasks that were successfully addressed elsewhere in the UN system.

Philip Ruddock, Attorney-General of Australia, said that the reality was that no country could beat terrorism by acting alone. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, Minister for the Interior of Pakistan, said his country had played a historic role in the global war against terrorism after 11 September. Nowhere had so much effort been put into curbing terrorism, extremism and sectarianism as in Pakistan.

Sylweryusz Krolak, Undersecretary of State of Poland, said the UN role in creating international mechanisms such as the Counter-Terrorism Committee was extremely important. Poland also fully supported the work of the UNODC.

Ahmed al-Abdulla, Minister of Justice of Kuwait, called on the Congress to include in the Declaration, a legal objective definition that took account of General Assembly decisions regarding terrorism which, among other things, established a difference between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples against foreign occupation.

Alberto Bernardes Costa, Minister of Justice of Portugal, said that a straight reading of the Congress agenda reflected the importance of international cooperation in the face of issues such as terrorism, financial crimes, corruption and human trafficking. However, further mechanisms were needed such as contact point networks, including in Portuguese, the third most-spoken language in the Western hemisphere.

Johannes Koskinen, Minister of Justice of Finland, said his Government was deeply concerned about the growing problem of trafficking in human beings, especially women and children.

Burkina Faso, Pakistan and Qatar offered to host the 12th UN Crime Congress in 2010.

Workshop 6 on computer-related crime concluded today; the United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime* was strongly urged to increase technical assistance to Member States, in the field of combating cybercrime.

Today's ancillary meetings provided practical planning advice by presenting a framework for countering AIDS in prisons and guidelines on how to deal with children who are either victims or witnesses of crime; the challenges of implementing the UN standards and norms in certain specific contexts were also explored. Alternative sentences, restorative justice, the use of technology, and innovative laws were considered as non-traditional responses to crime.

This evening, the Prime Minister of Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra hosted a social event for the participants of the Congress, at the Royal Thai Navy Convention Hall.