

Speech by Justice Minister Mr. Suwat Liptapanlop

April 18, 2005-04

Plenary Session

Excellencies,

Honourable and Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you all for having elected me as the President of the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Let me first of all on behalf of Thailand, our beautiful Land of Smile, extend to you our warmest welcome. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the United Nations, in particular to Mr. Eduardo Vetere and his remarkable staff, for giving a privilege to Thailand, as the second country in Asia, to host this important United Nations Congress.

Last week was our festive holiday season known as Song-Kran. It is a Thai new year and, for Thai, this is a time for respect and enjoyment. For the summer season, I think you agree that nothing is better than cooling ourselves with water. Often, young

generations gently pour water to their old relatives to show their love and respect. For friends and colleagues, pouring out water at each other to cool the summer is a very entertaining activity. If you have come here a few days earlier, I hope you had a chance to enjoy our Song-Karn season.

As you all may have experienced, we have here now in Bangkok not only “hot” weather, but also “hot” issues of crime prevention and criminal justice before this Congress, which require much more sophisticated responses and solutions than pouring out water all over; and I think that this has been demonstrated throughout the history of the United Nations involvement in this field. As you are probably aware, the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has its origin in the international conferences and congresses on issues related to the prevention and control of crime, organized in the nineteenth century under the auspices of the International Prison Commission, later renamed to become the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission (IPPC). In 1950, the

General Assembly approved a plan concerning the transfer of the functions of this Commission to the United Nations, including the convening of international congresses every five years. That was the springboard for the establishment of a tradition of institutionalized interventions of the United Nations in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice through the convening of the United Nations Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. So far, there have been ten United Nations Congresses which were held respectively in Geneva, London, Stockholm, Kyoto, Geneva, Caracas, Milan, Havana, Cairo and Vienna.

Over the past 50 years, these U.N. Congresses have formulated important policy options and normative standards applicable to all States, as approved in relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, which have progressively found their way into the corpus of customary international law or have been incorporated into treaty language addressing issues related to the prevention and control of crime, as, for example, the

1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime with its supplementary Protocols and the 2003 United Nations Convention against Corruption. Furthermore, the Congresses' recommendations have had an impact on the development of national criminal justice policies, strengthening of the notion of the rule of law and building a universal conscience of propriety, integrity and respect for common values, which are unquestionable in such important areas as the treatment of prisoners, independence of the judiciary, victims protection and juvenile justice.

The Eleventh United Nations Congress here in Bangkok comes at a crucial moment, when it is widely recognized that besides the traditional threats to international peace and security, new dangerous threats have emerged on a global scale, which are inter-connected and should no longer be seen in isolation from one another. I mainly refer to threats related to transnational organized crime in its various

forms, including drug trafficking, but also to corruption and terrorism. It is therefore of utmost importance for the international community, as a whole, to undertake concerted action towards building a new security consensus that would ensure that of these threats, those that are distant do not become imminent and those that are imminent do not actually become destructive. In this context, an effective response to the challenges posed by crime requires a combination of different elements and actions, such as a better international regulatory framework; an adequate compliance of the international community to such a framework; improved cooperation among States; a strong coordination among all national and international agencies involved; and, above all, political willingness, commitment and determination in taking appropriate measures at the national and local levels.

In view of the above, I do believe that under its main theme on “synergies and responses: strategic alliances in crime prevention and criminal justice”, the programme of this Congress - including its five

substantive items and six workshops - offers the opportunity for constructive deliberations with a view to developing comprehensive and holistic strategies against crime, in all its forms and manifestations.

I would like to thank all of you for your attendance and let me, as a final word, express my confidence that, building on the legacy of the previous Congresses and by using their work as a source of inspiration, this Congress will pave the way to more concerted action towards fostering respect for the rule of law and strengthening institutions of the criminal justice system, in the context of both the development and security agendas of the international community.

Thank you very much.
