

**Statement by Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio**  
**Apostolic Nuncio to the Kingdom of Thailand**  
**Head of the Delegation of the Holy See**  
**at the XI United Nations Congress**  
**on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice**  
(Bangkok, 25 April 2005)

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you for chairing this session and express to the Thai Government my appreciation for hosting the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Moreover, as Head of the Holy See Delegation, allow me to place on record our deep-felt gratitude to the Secretary General and Participants for kindly dedicating a moment of silence in homage to the late Pope John Paul II, at the Opening Session of the Congress.

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See wishes to express its appreciation to the United Nations for organizing this Congress on the most critical issue of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Crime is not only a threat to peace and order, but also to human dignity. In fact when a crime is committed, the human dignity, of both the victim and the offender, is affected and violated.

Due to the ultramodern facilities of communication, crime prevention is no more a question to be resolved locally; rather it is to be discussed at international fora and my Delegation would like to commend the Secretariat for its efforts in this direction and for the quality of the preparatory documentation for this Congress, especially the Discussion Guide and its multidisciplinary approach.

Mr. President,

The Holy See addresses a number of issues contained in the Vienna Declaration, especially through its Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Furthermore, there are other agencies of the Catholic Church, such as the International Catholic Commission for the Pastoral Care of Penitentiaries, that are also deeply involved in the same field. In this framework, I wish to present some issues which are of particular concern for the Holy See and that are related to crime prevention and criminal justice.

1. The first one is trafficking in human beings. This scourge is often responsible for taking away the hope for a decent future of the most vulnerable, especially women and children. This crime is partly related to declining possibilities for regular migration coinciding with the emergence of a market for irregular migration services. In order to face this growing phenomenon, it is of the utmost importance that national and international systems of criminal justice identify not only criminals, but also those who suffer as victims from trafficking.

2. A second point, which has long been a grave concern for the Holy See, in the framework of criminal justice and crime prevention, is the sale and possession of firearms. This issue is closely related to building peace and is a key component of a truly sustainable economic and social development. Clearly, there is a link between crime and trafficking in firearms that feeds terrorism at national and international levels. A reduction in the availability of firearms will facilitate the establishment of peace and security. It will also contribute to channel money spent on trafficking weapons, into programmes for development.

3. The third point of concern deals with corruption. Corruption assails the basic values of the society, the rule of law and justice. It undermines the goals of democratic and peace loving nations. In the public sector, corruption flies in the face of good governance. It needs to be viewed in a broader governance context, involving citizens in curbing corruption. Therefore, it is crucial to cooperate with the key segments of the political and judicial sector, with civil society and the media, in the fight against corruption.

In the world of commerce, corruption distorts competition and the market, while increasing the suffering of the poor. Where allowed to thrive, corruption poses a serious threat to the stability and security of domestic structures and, eventually, impoverishes many countries. However, it is also an international phenomenon and often reflects an unstable social environment that hinders sustainable development.

4. Crimes, in post conflict situations, represent the fourth area of concern. These crimes have a very destructive force, until the judicial system is restored, competent judges and police officers are in place, functional courts and prisons systems are fully operational and the basic needs of the population are met. Crimes in post-conflict situations destabilize and transform the hope and trust of a population into scepticism, desperation and disillusionment. A worrying phenomenon, sometimes found in post-conflict societies, is a downward spiral. Rather than stabilizing and consolidating the economy, it fosters more corruption and close links between organized crime and politics. Public trust in institutions, political parties and even leaders erode quickly. The flourishing of crime causes job destruction, weakening of already shaky social security networks, as well as health and education systems. This results in growing poverty and in undermining democratisation and institutional building.

5. Another aspect of our concern for the prevention of crime and criminal justice is the effective implementation of the UN established rules concerning the just treatment of prisoners and minors. In this regard, due consideration should also be given to the proposals which have been put forward in some instances about the elaboration of a Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Prisoners. In this document, particular attention should be devoted to a treatment of prisoners, fully respectful of their human dignity and to their meaningful reinsertion into society.

It is the fervent hope of the Holy See that the Bangkok Congress will help to address the aforementioned challenges, to raise awareness and to promote strategies and best practices for crime prevention, while enhancing criminal justice reform, making it ever more effective to ensure order and stability at national and international levels.

Thank you, Mr. President.