

12th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Opens today

SALVADOR, 12 April (UN Information Service) – “Organized crime poses a threat to international peace and security like never before. It is a major impediment to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals,” said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his message to the 12th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

“The United Nations, for its part, is taking a “one UN” approach by bringing crime prevention into the mainstream of our work, particularly in conflict prevention, peace-keeping and peace-building. Crime is also increasingly on the agenda of the Security Council. We are stressing the need for human rights to be at the forefront of efforts to prevent and punish crime. And we are focusing not just what we are against – crime – but what we are for: justice and the rule of law,” he added.

The Congress, which is being hosted by the Government of Brazil, opened today in Salvador on a sombre note with a minute of silence for the late President of Poland, Lech Kaczynski and the other victims of Saturday’s tragedy.

“We have come a long way to get to Salvador – not just in terms of distance, but in terms of the criminal justice reforms that have been made over the past decade. And yet, crime is a threat to security, justice and development like never before. Therefore, this Congress comes at an important moment – one that we must seize in order to prevent crime and build justice in a changing world,” added John Sandage, the Executive-Secretary of the Congress on behalf of Antonio Maria Costa, Secretary-General of the Congress and Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

“In particular, we must focus on reducing vulnerability: for example among individuals, like women, children, youth and migrants; among states, particularly where governance is weak; and among sectors, like the internet and the financial sector, that are being exploited by criminals. We must also identify, and cut, the links between drugs, crime and terrorism,” he added.

In his remarks to the Congress, the Brazilian Minister of Justice Luiz Paulo Teles Ferreira Barreto said: “the economic and social development of a nation is possible only by ensuring security, peace and other rights inherent to citizenship.” He welcomed the participants of the Congress and expressed his hope that the forum would be a fruitful exchange of experiences and dialogue between countries, contributing to improving the criminal justice system and strengthening the rule of law, in an attempt to promote democracy and economic and social development.

The opening day’s programme includes a discussion on developments in technology in fighting cybercrime and the provision of technical assistance to facilitate the ratification of international instruments related to terrorism.

A press briefing with Luiz Paulo Teles Ferreira Barreto, Brazilian Minister of Justice, Romeu Tuma Junior, National Secretary of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Brazil, and John Sandage, Executive Secretary of the 12th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice also took place on the opening day.

The Congress is a global forum that has brought together the largest and most diverse gathering of policymakers and practitioners in crime prevention and criminal justice from all walks of life. More than 3,000 participants are expected at the 12th Congress.

There are eight items on the Congress agenda that will be discussed in the Plenary and the two Committees: Children, youth and crime; terrorism; crime prevention; smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons; money-laundering; cybercrime; international cooperation in fighting crime; and, violence against migrants and their families.

In addition to the eight items above, the 12th Crime Congress will focus on the role of the criminal justice system as a key pillar of the rule of law architecture and the need for safe and just societies as a prerequisite for development and achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Five workshops on the following themes will also be held: International criminal justice education for the rule of law; survey of United Nations and other best practices in the treatment of prisoners in the criminal justice system; practical approaches to preventing urban crime; links between drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime: international coordinated response and strategies and best practices against overcrowding in correctional facilities.

A high-level segment will be held during the last three days of the Congress (17-19 April), where more than 25 Ministers and other high-level government representatives will address the main agenda items. The political declaration adopted by the Congress will be submitted to the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in its 19th session, to be held in Vienna, Austria, in May 2010.

More than 70 meetings organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on various issues related to crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law will also take place.

* * * * *

For further information:

To download the press kit and other information (also in Portuguese), visit:
www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/events/2010/12th-crime-congress.html
www.un.org/en/conf/crimecongress2010/

For live webcast: www.un.org/webcast/crime2010