

**12th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
1st Plenary Meeting (AM)**

**United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Opens in Brazil with Calls for Stronger Legal Tools**

Secretary-General, Executive Director Stress Need to Implement Treaties

SALVADOR, 12 April (UN Information Service) – The Twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice opened this morning in Salvador, Brazil, with a fervent call by United Nations and Government officials for stronger global cooperation among all stakeholders, as well as stronger legal tools to stamp out organized crime.

Noting that organized crime posed a greater threat to international peace and security than ever before, John Sandage, Executive Secretary of the Congress and Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Treaty Affairs with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), said in a statement delivered on behalf of [United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) that it was a major obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It also inflicted grave harm on vulnerable groups such as women, children and migrants, as well as vulnerable countries and societies grappling with weak governance, underdevelopment and conflict.

“Sharpening our legal weapons is a must,” he emphasized. “We are all affected by crime; therefore, we have a shared responsibility to act.” A decade after the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and amid growing concern about the dark side of over globalization, the world was looking to the Congress to provide a better understanding of the state of crime and strengthen the criminal justice response.

He urged all States to ratify and implement the Palermo Convention and its three Protocols, and to establish a mechanism to review their implementation, as had been done in 2009 with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. “I also urge you to strengthen bilateral, regional and international cooperation. This must be more than an intergovernmental process,” he stressed. Calling on all stakeholders to get involved, he urged everyone to be more innovative so as to be “one step ahead” of such emerging threats as cybercrime, environmental crime and counterfeiting, and to be more effective in stopping the flow of funds arising from corruption and money-laundering.

For its part, the United Nations was taking a “One UN” approach by mainstreaming crime prevention into its work, particularly concerning conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, Mr. Sandage said, pointing out that crime was 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 on what we are against -- crime -- but what we are for: justice and the rule of law.”

Mr. Sandage went on to deliver a statement on behalf of [UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa](#), saying the Congress was part of a busy calendar of events in 2010 that provided an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen crime prevention and criminal justice. It would enable participants to focus on making the criminal justice response “fit for purpose”, take stock of the world crime situation, and assess global preparedness to deal with it, particularly emerging threats. “Frankly, at the moment the picture is rather blurry due to a shortage of information and analysis,” he said. UNODC was trying to sharpen the focus by preparing a threat assessment of transnational organized crime.

He said the meeting also provided an opportunity to start a systematic review of all crime-related standards and norms to ensure a legal basis for achieving security and justice for all. It was important to ensure that United Nations guidelines on crime prevention worked and to reduce crime among vulnerable groups, States with weak governance, and the Internet and financial sectors, which were

exploited by criminals. "We must also identify and cut the links between drugs, crime and terrorism," he added.

Next month's Crime Commission in Vienna would be the first chance to drive forward the strategies outlined in the Salvador Declaration, he said. Ministers should participate in the upcoming high-level meeting of the General Assembly in New York to foster political momentum in support of the Transnational Organized Crime Convention, he said, urging non-States parties to bring along instruments of ratification for deposit. "What better way to mark the tenth anniversary of the Palermo Convention?"

Furthermore, he urged all concerned to use the Conference of Parties to the Convention, scheduled for October, to make better use of the world's foremost crime-fighting treaty and its three Protocols, including by agreeing on a mechanism to review its implementation, which would enable everyone to measure progress and identify technical assistance needs. "We did it in Doha for the anti-corruption Convention. We can do it in Vienna for the Palermo Convention," he added.

The international community had come a long way in terms of criminal justice reforms in the past decade, but crime was a greater threat to security, justice and development than ever before, he said, stressing the need to seize the moment so as to prevent crime and build justice in a changing world. Noting that Crime Congresses were remembered for tackling specific problems, he recalled that the first Congress, held in 1955, had adopted the Standard Minimum Rules on the Treatment of Prisoners, and the tenth had set the stage for the Convention against Corruption. "This week, it is up to you all to define the legacy of Salvador. Let us, therefore, take steps that will address the real crime and justice challenges of our time," he said.

The Congress then elected Luiz Paulo Teles Ferreira Barreto, Brazil's Minister of Justice, as President of the Congress. Mr. Barreto said that the theme for the Twelfth Congress -- "Comprehensive strategies for global challenges: crime prevention and criminal justice systems and their development in a changing world -- reflected the growing importance of international cooperation to tackle the transnational character that crime had developed, and the complexity of the instruments and actions necessary to combat it in today's world.

He went on to state that, while much remained to be done, "Brazil has" responded to these challenges without hesitation, guided by the awareness that fostering the right to security is grounded firstly on security system in a narrower sense, secondly in the management of the penitentiary system and thirdly on the criminal justice system". In 2004, the Government had begun a judiciary-reform process based on a set of normative alterations that sought to optimize and expedite access to justice. "These changes resulted from a general agreement among the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches, formalized in a State Pact for a more expeditious and republican Judiciary," he added.

Accordingly, Brazil had broadened the attention directed towards, and the funds allocated for, the penitentiary system, he said. It had also started building a new paradigm for public security policies, grounded on the following fundamental principles: prevention; cross-disciplinary implementation of policies, programmes and actions; international cooperation; civil society participation in the planning, execution and assessment of programmes and actions; and the training of Government officials and officers.

The first topic of the Congress -- children, youth and crime -- was quite significant to Brazil, he said, noting that since 1990, the country had adopted the "full protection doctrine", assuming that children and adolescents must be protected by the State. As for the second theme, terrorism, Brazil vehemently repudiated it in all its manifestations and understood that the fight against that transnational crime must be based on the United Nations Charter, as well as international law and international humanitarian law. Lately, the belief had been strengthened that the best way to fight terrorism was through strategic intelligence and cooperation among security institutions, both nationally and internationally.

Mr. Barreto went on to outline his country's actions in the other subjects on the Congress agenda: crime prevention, which was crucially important as one of the pillars of Brazil's policies; criminal justice responses to trafficking in migrants, human trafficking and their ties to transnational organized crime; and international cooperation in the fight against money-laundering, one of the Justice Ministry's priorities. "The laboratory to combat money-laundering is an example of the use of science and technology against crime, an issue covered by the sixth topic in the agenda of the Congress, 'Recent aspects of the use of science and technology by offenders and its use by authorities'."

Speaking next, Jaques Wagner, Governor of Bahia, said the first holding of the Congress in Brazil demonstrated his state's efforts to implement the national foreign policy of promoting exchanges with other nations. Recalling that Bahia had hosted the First Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean in December 2008, he said that event had drawn 33 Heads of State from the region and led to the consolidation of immigration policy. In the context of new challenges during the post-financial crisis era, the Congress would work to prevent crime and criminal justice in a changing world. It would also contribute to more efficient public policies, especially in terms of criminal justice systems and alternative punishment, as well as mechanisms for providing all citizens with effective access to criminal justice.

João Henrique De Barrados Carneiro, Mayor of Salvador, said national and international legal regimes must learn to function in a new context, pointing out that modern technological advances and increasingly porous borders had advanced the growth of smuggling and human trafficking, money-laundering and cyber crimes. The Congress, where national authorities from more than 50 countries were gathered under the auspices of the "most plural of international institutions, the United Nations", was an opportunity to build consensus on the promotion of criminal justice. Noting that the Congress had gathered the highest and best authorities on the subject since 1965, he welcomed them to Salvador, adding that the city was itself no stranger to diversity.

Speaking on behalf of various groups of countries were the representatives of Algeria ("Group of 77" developing countries and China), Spain (European Union), Zimbabwe (Group of African States), Republic of Korea (Group of Asian States) and Argentina (Group of Latin American and Caribbean States).

Spain's representative called for a fruitful discussion leading to the adoption of a declaration to which all States would contribute. The Republic of Korea's representative urged all Member States to facilitate the quick return of stolen assets and to help States build the required capacity, stressing the importance of inter-agency cooperation and long-term technical assistance to improve the overall capacity of criminal justice systems, and calling for international and regional cooperation.

Argentina's representative recalled that his Group, meeting in Costa Rica in preparation for the Congress, had agreed on the need to strengthen the Transnational Organized Crime through effective implementation of the Palermo Convention, and suggested that States consider developing a mechanism to monitor its implementation and that of other international treaties. He also stressed the importance of social inclusion in public life, and of distancing children and young people from crime by stepping up education to address poverty and social exclusion, while promoting knowledge and use of United Nations rules and norms. The State, media and the private sector must be included in the process, he said.

Algeria's representative protested the fact that parts of the agenda for the Congress had been drawn up by the Secretariat when it should have been left to Member States. Mr. Sandage replied by citing the technical difficulty of preparing speaking notes in Portuguese for the Chair, stressing that it was not meant to set a precedent.

Also during the meeting, Steven Malby of UNODC's Division of Policy Analysis and Public Affairs introduced the report of the United Nations Secretary-General (document A/CONF.213/3) containing an overview of the state of crime and criminal justice worldwide.

He said that over 55 years, the international community had reached ground-breaking agreement in characterizing, preventing and combating crimes such as transnational organized crime, corruption, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants, and the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms. While they shared an intimate link with day-to-day crime such as robbery, burglary, assault and theft, there was no international definition for such conventional crimes. National codes differed in definitions, penalties and offence thresholds, while law enforcement and criminal justice systems required different approaches to measuring crime internationally, he said.

Current tools for measuring conventional crimes were based on police statistics, hospital records and population-based surveys. To estimate the size and flow of illicit markets, more data were needed to provide a clearer view of the overall picture, such as data on the seizure of people, drugs and weapons, he said, noting that statistics on intentional homicide were the most widely available internationally due to the grave nature of the crime and the involvement of law enforcement and medical institutions in its aftermath.

He said intentional homicide claimed the lives of an estimated 490,000 people annually, a world average of 7.6 cases per 100,000 people, according to UNODC research. That was almost 10 times

the estimated number of direct conflict-related cases every year. Statistics were very limited in large parts of Africa, but intentional homicide rates in South and Central America, as well as the Caribbean and Southern Africa, were typically five to 10 times higher than those found in other parts of the world.

While most countries for which data were available showed stable or decreasing homicide trends in the last five years, homicide was on the rise in countries with significant levels of gang, drug and organized crime activity, he said, adding that organized crime had a direct, devastating impact on victims. UNDOC's 2009 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons found that more than 21,400 victims of trafficking had been identified in 111 countries that reported victim data.

In organizational matters, the Congress adopted its provisional agenda and organization of work (document A/CONF.213/1 and its annex), as well as its rules of procedure (document A/CONF.213/2).

Mr. Sandage announced that the following members had been elected to the General Committee: Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Sudan and Zambia from the African States; China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Philippines and the Republic of Korea from the Asian States; Azerbaijan and two remaining countries to be announced later, from the Eastern European States; Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Panama and Peru from the Latin American and Caribbean States; and Austria, Australia, Canada, Finland, Italy and the United States from the Western European and other States.

Sudan and Finland were elected Chairs of Committee I and Committee II, respectively.

The Congress also appointed a Credentials Committee comprising Brazil, China, Jamaica, Philippines, Russian Federation, Spain, United Republic of Tanzania, United States and Zambia, and endorsed the recommendations made during pre-Congress consultations on arrangements for preparation of the Congress report.

Also during the opening meeting, participants observed a minute of silence in memory of President Lech Kaczynski of Poland and others killed in a plane crash on 10 April.

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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
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