

## **Salvador Declaration Calls for Criminal Justice Reform to Safeguard Human Rights, Security and Development**

SALVADOR, 19 April (UN Information Service) – The 12th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has wrapped up in Salvador, Brazil with the adoption of a Declaration that calls for Member States to adapt their criminal justice systems to a changing world. The Congress, which is held every five years, took place from 12 to 19 April. Representatives from more than 100 countries took part, as well as participants from international, regional, and non-governmental organizations. In addition to political meetings and drafting sessions, numerous ancillary meetings were held on a wide range of issues related to criminal justice.

“The legacy of Salvador is that unless there is international justice cooperation, the world will not succeed in providing more security and justice for the people”, said Mr. Romeu Tuma jr., National Secretary of Justice of Brazil. “I hope that from Salvador we can effectively turn words into actions.”

In the Salvador Declaration, Member States underlined the necessity of respecting and protecting human rights in the prevention of crime and the administration of criminal justice. “As human beings, as well as members of the community of civilized nations, we have a shared responsibility to place human rights at the heart of the justice system” said the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa.

The Congress looked at the impact of crime on the safety and well-being of societies. “There can be no security, no development without justice”, said Mr. Costa. “Crime prevention and criminal justice are not ends in themselves: they create safer and richer societies”, he said.

Member States declared that they are “greatly concerned by the negative impact of organized crime on human rights, the rule of law, security and development, as well as by the sophistication, diversity and trans-national aspects of organized crime and its links with other criminal and, in some cases, terrorist activities.” “Organized crime has become a business with macro-economic dimensions, comparable to the national income of many countries and the turnover of the world’s largest corporations”, warned Mr. Costa.

Because of the trans-national nature of organized crime, Member States called for greater international cooperation, like mutual legal assistance and information sharing, to disrupt illicit activity and bring criminals to justice. They stressed the need to make more effective use of the United Nations Convention against Trans-national Crime which was adopted in Palermo a decade ago. A Conference of Parties to the Palermo Convention will meet in October in Vienna. “I urge Member States to agree on an implementation review mechanism in order to measure progress and identify needs for assistance”, said Mr. Costa.

One of the main themes of the Congress – echoed in the Salvador Declaration – was that Member States have to adapt their criminal justice systems to changing times. For example, they called for a review of the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice to consider, if necessary, updating and supplementing them. They focused on using new technologies to fight crime, for example for foiling cyber-crime, money laundering, and human trafficking. And they looked at ways of fighting new forms of crime, like environment-related crime, identity-related crime, the piracy of digital material, and cyber-crime. “These threats are hard to capture: they travel as bytes, disguised as licit transactions, sourced in hard-to-define jurisdictions – yet, their complexity must not be a deterrent”, said Mr. Costa.

In an important breakthrough, Member States agreed to explore ways of universal regulation to counter cyber-crime. “This could open the way for a new cyber-crime Convention”, said Mr. Costa.

The Congress devoted a great deal of attention to vulnerable groups, like children and youth, women, migrants, and drug addicts.

Prisons and the rights of prisoners were also a high profile issue. The Salvador Declaration calls on Member States to improve prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners, seek alternatives to imprisonment, and reduce the number of prisoners in pre-trial detention.

Since money is a big motive for crime, Member States looked at ways of increasing the risks and lowering the benefits of crime. The Salvador Declaration calls on states to implement the UN (Merida) Convention against Corruption, crack down on money laundering and terrorist financing, and strengthen measures to seize, confiscate and recover the proceeds of crime.

Member States stressed the need for greater technical assistance in delivering justice, and praised UNODC's experience and expertise. Brazil announced (in line with articles 30 and 62 of the Palermo and Merida Conventions) that resources confiscated from money laundering and other crimes will be used to finance the implementation of those treaties and support criminal justice reform in developing countries through UNODC, and invited others to follow its example.

Knowledge is essential for evidence-based policy. "Unlike in other domains where the UN is the world's best information provider, we don't have the definitions, data and logical framework to report on crime trends, understand its causes and measure its size", said Mr. Costa. In the Salvador Declaration, Member States are invited to strengthen the capacity of UNODC "to collect, analyse and disseminate accurate, reliable and comparable data on world crime and victimization trends". Member States are also encouraged to strengthen their national data collection capacity.

While the main focus of the Congress was on the role of states, the point was also stressed that crime prevention and criminal justice can not be achieved by governments alone – it must involve all stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, the media, educational institutions and the public at large. "The law will not rule unless we launch massive efforts to engage common people and make society at large willing to promote the culture of justice", said Mr. Costa.

Member States welcomed the offer of the Government of Qatar to host the next (13th) UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2015.

The next major UN-related meeting on crime will be the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice that will take place in Vienna from 17-21 May 2010. The main theme will be how to stop the trafficking of cultural property.

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For further information:

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