United Nations
60 years of achievement
60 years of United Nations Crime Congresses

Every five years, policymakers and practitioners working in crime prevention and criminal justice gather for the United Nations Crime Congress to help shape the agenda and standards of the United Nations on crime prevention and criminal justice. The Doha Congress in 2015, which marks the 60th anniversary of the Crime Congress, will consider how best to integrate crime prevention and criminal justice into the wider United Nations agenda.

The United Nations Crime Congress is the world’s largest and most diverse gathering of governments, civil society, academia and experts in crime prevention and criminal justice. For 60 years, the congresses have had an impact on criminal justice policies and strengthened international cooperation against the global threat of transnational organized crime.

The practice of holding international conferences on crime control matters at five-year intervals dates back to 1872 when conferences were held under the auspices of the International Prison Commission, which later became the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission (IPPC).

The First United Nations Crime Congress was held in Geneva in 1955.

Sixty years later, this tradition continues with the Government of Qatar hosting the Thirteenth United Nations Crime Congress in Doha. The theme of the Thirteenth Congress is “Integrating crime prevention and criminal justice into the wider United Nations agenda to address social and economic challenges and to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and public participation”.

Over 50 governments and 500 participants took part in the first UN Crime Prevention Congress. The main focus of the event was the treatment of juvenile delinquents and prisoners, the numbers of which had risen dramatically in post-war Europe.

**Congress topics:**
- “Open” penal and correctional institutions
- The selection and training of prison personnel
- The proper use of prison labour
- The impact of the mass media on juvenile deviancy

**The Congress made recommendations:**
For the prevention of juvenile delinquency through the community, the family, schools and social services, as well as the selection and training of prison personnel.

The First Congress adopted the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

**Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners**
The First Congress concluded with the adoption of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners which cover the general management of institutions, and are applicable to all categories of prisoners, criminal or civil, in pre-trial detention or following conviction and sentencing, including prisoners subject to “security measures” or corrective measures ordered by a judge.

Since their development and adoption the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners have had immeasurable impact on the treatment of prisoners worldwide. Today they remain the standards against which many concerned human rights, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations determine the treatment of prisoners.
Over one thousand participants converged on London for the 1960 Congress which focused on crime, including juvenile delinquency, that resulted from social changes accompanying rapid economic development. Following the adoption in 1959 of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the Congress concentrated on new forms of juvenile delinquency, their origin, prevention and treatment.

The Congress made recommendations on:

- Short-term imprisonment
- The integration of prison labour with the national economy
- The remuneration of prisoners
- Pre-release treatment and assistance to dependents of prisoners
- Parole and released prisoners' transition to community life
- After-care, including vocational guidance, training and placement
- The role of national planning in preventing crime

Special police services for the prevention of juvenile delinquency

The Second Congress recommended special police services for juvenile justice between the police, various national specialized agencies and the general public regarding measures to prevent juvenile delinquency.

Establishment of Regional Networks

To involve developing regions more closely with the United Nations Crime Programme the Second Congress set in motion the creation of regional crime institutes.
The Third Congress analyzed the relationship between criminality and social change.

The Congress topics focused on:
- Social change and criminality
- Social forces and the prevention of criminality
- Community action for preventing crime
- Special preventive and treatment measures for juveniles and young adults
- Measures to reduce recidivism

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

The Congress recognized the importance of research and training in the field of crime, including the launching of regional and inter-regional initiatives. As a follow-up to the actions of the Third Congress, the United Nations Social Defence Research Institute was established in 1968 in Rome. In 1989, the Economic and Social Council formally recognised the expansion of UNSDRI into the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).
Under the theme “Crime and Development” the Kyoto Congress was the first to be preceded by regional preparatory meetings, which were held in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Previously, there had been little opportunity for experts of all regions to formulate a common policy approach to the items on the agenda.

**Congress topics:**
- Social defence policies in relation to development planning
- Public participation in crime prevention and control of crime and delinquency
- The organization of research for policy development in social defence
- Developments in the correctional field

**Improved crime prevention planning for economic and social development**

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It further recognized that crime in all its forms sapped the energies of nations, undermining efforts to achieve a more wholesome environment and a better life for their people. In addition, the Congress discussed for the first time the problem of terrorism and airplane hijacking.

**79 governments +++ 31 NGOs +++ 998 participants**
The Congress returned to Geneva in 1975. For the first time, discussions focused on the new forms and dimensions of criminality, including organized crime as a business, and the costs of crime.

The Congress made recommendations on:

- Offences involving works of art and other cultural property
- Criminality associated with alcoholism and drug abuse
- Interpersonal violence
- Criminality associated with migration and flight from natural disasters and hostilities
- Female criminality
- Terrorism

The Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Fifth Congress adopted a resolution in which it recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, subsequently developed into a convention by the Commission on Human Rights. The Congress also recommended the formulation of an international code of conduct for law enforcement officials.
The Sixth Congress called for broad support and participation in crime prevention and the development of alternatives to imprisonment, as well as measures to address crime and abuse of power.

The Congress adopted resolutions on:
- Crime trends and crime prevention strategies
- Improvement of crime statistics
- Development of minimum standards of juvenile justice
- Measures to put an end to torture and extra-legal executions
- De-institutionalization of corrections and community measures
- Specific needs of women prisoners

The “Caracas Declaration”
Through the “Caracas Declaration”, Member States underlined the vital role played by the United Nations in encouraging international cooperation and the development of norms and guidelines in the field of criminal policy. Member States were also called to ensure that those responsible for the functioning of the criminal justice system should be properly qualified for their tasks and should perform them in a manner, which is independent of personal or group interest. The Congress also recommended the establishment of a regional institute in Africa.
The Milan Congress was preceded by regional and interregional preparatory meetings which proved valuable for their access to new information and ongoing research. The meetings were also strategically important for evaluating progress in the implementation of recommendations from previous congresses.

The Congress approved:
- The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice
- The Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power
- The Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary
- The Model Agreement on the Transfer of Foreign Prisoners.

The Milan Congress adopted the Milan Plan of Action and several new United Nations standards and norms under the theme “Crime prevention for freedom, justice, peace and development”

The Milan Plan of Action:
The Milan Plan of Action called the attention of the international community to the problem of crime as an issue of global concern, hampering the political, economic, social and cultural development of people. It reiterated that crime threatened human rights, fundamental freedoms, and peace, stability and security. It also recommended that the United Nations, as a universal forum, has an important role to play in multilateral cooperation, particularly in taking concerted action against terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime.
The Havana Congress took place at a time when it was recognized that crime with its international dimensions was increasing at an alarming rate.

The Congress approved standards on:

- The Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners
- The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency
- The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty
- The Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials
- The United Nations Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors
- The Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers
- Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures

The Congress also approved:

- The Model Treaty on Extradition
- The Model Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance
- The Model Treaty on Transfer of Proceedings in Criminal Matters
- The Model Treaty on Transfer of Supervision of Offenders Conditionally Sentenced or Conditionally Released

The Eighth Congress recommended action against organized crime and terrorism under the theme “International crime prevention and criminal justice in the twenty-first century”

Prevention and control of organized crime and measures against terrorism

The Congress recommended research into the structure of organized crime and evaluation of the existing counter-measures, as well as strengthened international cooperation against terrorism. The Congress also recommended that a summit be held in Paris in 1991, leading to the establishment of an intergovernmental commission on crime prevention and criminal justice as the principal policy-making body of the United Nations.

127 governments +++ 46 NGOs +++ 1,127 participants
The Egyptian capital was the venue for the 1995 Congress, the first to incorporate technical workshops as an integral part of its proceedings. The workshops discussed strategies to prevent violent crime, computerization of criminal justice, the role of mass media in crime prevention and extradition.

**Congress topics:**
- Action against transnational and organized crime
- The role of criminal law in the protection of the environment
- Criminal justice and police systems
- Crime prevention strategies in urban areas
- Youth crime

**International cooperation and practical technical assistance for strengthening the rule of law**

The Congress placed a high priority on the technical cooperation and advisory services offered by the United Nations to assist Member States in achieving the goals of preventing crime within and among States and improving the response to crime. The recommendations for assistance included training programmes, field studies and action-oriented research at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels.

**Programme Network of Institutes (PNI)**

In 1995 the PNI welcomed the U.S. Justice Department’s National Institute of Justice and the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, Vancouver, Canada. The PNI members conduct research, disseminate information and provide training and technical assistance.

**NINTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders Cairo, Egypt 28 April - 5 May 1995**

The Ninth Congress focused on international cooperation and practical technical assistance for strengthening the rule of law under the theme “Seeking security and justice for all”
Almost two thousand participants met in the Austrian capital of Vienna in 2000 for the first Crime Congress of the new Millennium. “Crime and justice, meeting the challenges of the 21st century” was the theme of this Congress.

Congress topics and workshops:
- How to promote the rule of law and strengthen the criminal justice system
- International cooperation in combating transnational organized crime
- Effective crime prevention: keeping pace with new developments
- Combating corruption
- Crimes related to the computer network
- Community involvement in crime prevention
- Women in the criminal justice system

The Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice

The Tenth Congress adopted by acclamation the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice in which Member States pledged to take resolute and speedy measures to combat terrorism, trafficking in human beings, illicit trade in firearms, smuggling of migrants and money-laundering. The Declaration further committed States to take enhanced international action against corruption, stressing the need for a new international legal instrument in addition to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Programme Network of Institutes (PNI)
UNICRI, together with the regional and associated institutes (PNI), helped to organize the workshops thus continuing to assist the international community in strengthening co-operation in the area of crime prevention and criminal justice.

137 governments +++ 58 NGOs +++ 1,902 participants
The Eleventh Congress adopted the Bangkok Declaration, a crucial political document laying the foundation for and showing the direction towards strengthening international coordination and cooperation efforts, in order to prevent and combat crime.

Congress topics
- Effective measures to combat transnational organized crime
- Economic and financial crime: challenges to sustainable development
- Corruption: threats and trends in the twenty-first century
- International cooperation against terrorism and links between terrorism and other criminal activities
- Making standards work: 50 years of standard-setting in crime prevention and criminal justice

Workshops
- 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
- Workshop on strategies and best practices against overcrowding in correctional facilities

129 governments +++ 35 NGOs +++ 3,000+ participants
The Twelfth Congress adopted the Salvador Declaration, which among other things, opened the door to discussions on new national and international responses to cybercrime.

**Congress topics**

- 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

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104 governments +++ 45 NGOs +++ 17 IGOs +++ 2,000+ participants
PREVENTING CRIME TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT