

CONCEPT NOTE

High -level Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on "The Role of Regional Organizations in Strengthening and Implementing Crime Prevention Initiatives and Criminal Justice Responses"

6 June 2019, Trusteeship Council Chamber

Background

By resolution 73/186, the General Assembly invited the President of the General Assembly, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, to hold a High-level debate on the role of regional organizations in strengthening and implementing crime prevention initiatives and criminal justice responses.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations has remained a cornerstone of the work of the United Nations as recognized in the UN Charter and numerous resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Regional and sub-regional organizations have continued to play pivotal roles in their respective regions in the areas of peace and security, human rights and development.

Meanwhile, cooperation between the United Nations and these organizations in matters related to crime prevention and criminal justice has intensified and become increasingly important given the magnitude and complexity of challenges facing the international community today.

The United Nations and regional organizations in many ways have unique and complementary capacities that when properly coordinated, can produce good results. This cooperation now plays a critical role in virtually every area of the Organization's mandate. These relationships have been strengthened and deepened in recent years across a wide spectrum in the three pillars of United Nations work, namely: peace and security, human rights and development.

Strengthening these partnerships is important in promoting the principle of comparative advantages, complementarity and burden-sharing. No country is an island and domestic needs, threats and challenges are deeply interconnected with the ones of neighboring countries. There has been a track record of tangible results when the United Nations has worked closely with regional and sub-regional organizations. These organizations have unique understanding and deeper knowledge of situations in their respective regions owing to their geographic proximity, and are invaluable in enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations. They also have a compelling interest and a better knowledge of different parties on the ground and can leverage this local knowledge, relationships and resources to support crime prevention and criminal justice efforts. The United Nations also has a comprehensive approach and extensive experience and capacities that can be shared with regional and sub-regional organizations.

There are many examples of this evolving relationship in matters related to crime prevention and criminal justice. Partnerships and cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-

regional organizations around the world include the African Union (AU); European Union (EU), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN); League of Arab States (LAS), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Organization of American States (OAS), Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Council of Europe (COE), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center and the Commonwealth of Independent States, among others.

Beyond cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations, recent experiences have demonstrated the increasingly important value of trilateral cooperation between the UN and more than one regional organization.

For some time, a number of United Nations documents, reports and surveys have reflected the increasing importance of regional organizations to criminal justice and crime prevention. The General Assembly has emphasized the intrinsic link between sustainable development and effective and accessible criminal justice systems and institutions.

In the Doha Declaration on *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*, adopted by the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Member States pledged to strengthen international cooperation in crime prevention and ensure that criminal justice systems are effective, fair, humane and accountable, and ultimately prevent and counter all crimes. They likewise recognized the importance of regional organizations in crime prevention and criminal justice (GA resolution 70/174). Regional and sub-regional organizations may also have an important contribution to make in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Access to fair justice systems, accountable and inclusive institutions as well as measures to combat corruption, curb illicit financial flows derived from criminal activity and counter all forms of exploitation, trafficking, violence and torture are integral to sustainable development. The implementation of the UN Conventions dedicated to organized crime, corruption and drugs and other criminal phenomena is thus of the utmost importance, and we must commend all the UN bodies and international actors that are committed to making those legal instruments and the UN crime prevention and criminal justice programme effective.

This thematic debate will provide an input to the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to take place in Kyoto in April 2020, the theme of which is *“Advancing crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda”* (GA resolution 72/192).

One of the questions that will be addressed in the thematic debate is how to tackle social and economic challenges and promote sustainable development through strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice systems, norms and standards, while combating the threats that undermine them, in particular transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking and corruption. In this vein, the debate will focus on priorities, gaps and emerging issues that require further attention and support in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - from the

standpoint of regional organizations and the point of view of national policies and international cooperation.

Going forward there are lessons to be learnt from past and present cooperation for concrete actions to be taken in building more effective partnerships between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations on crime prevention and criminal justice, drawing on their respective strengths. Doing so will facilitate the implementation of their mandates and the overall objectives of the United Nations as enshrined in the Charter.

Objective

The main objective of the High-level thematic debate is to provide a platform for participants to exchange views on:

- i) What concrete measures can be taken to build and strengthen strategic partnerships between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations in matters of crime prevention and criminal justice?
- ii) What needs to be done to strengthen mechanisms to promote common understanding and effective coordination across a range of issues relevant to crime prevention and criminal justice?
- iii) How to galvanize international support towards building the capacities of regional and sub-regional organizations in crime prevention and criminal justice?
- iv) What actions need to be taken to foster cooperation and experience-sharing amongst the regional and sub-regional organizations in crime prevention and criminal justice?
- v) How regional and sub-regional organizations can be engaged and mobilized to play an effective role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as it relates to crime prevention and criminal justice?

Format and Outcome

The High-level Thematic debate will consist of a high-level opening segment, a high-level segment for interventions from Member States, followed by two consecutive interactive panel discussions and concluding remarks by the President of the General Assembly.

The **opening** is expected to feature remarks by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Chair of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Chair of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Executive-Director of UNODC. A brief presentation of the outputs of the International Conference on Goal 16 (to be held in Rome on 27-29 May 2019) will follow.

The morning panel will discuss "Enhancing the strategic relationship between the UN and regional organizations in Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: Challenges facing the international community."

The afternoon panel will discuss "Galvanizing support of regional organizations in matters of crime prevention and criminal justice in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Current gaps, emerging trends and new challenges."

The **outcome** will be a President's summary of the discussion that will be prepared for transmission to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, as well as to all Member States. The meeting will be webcast.

Draft Programme

10:00 am – 10:30 am	Opening
10:30 am – 11:15 am	High-level segment with interventions from Member States
11:15 am – 1:00 pm	Interactive Panel Discussion: Enhancing the strategic relationship between the UN and regional organizations in Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: Challenges facing the international community
Lunch Break	
3:00 pm – 5:50 pm	Interactive Panel Discussion: Galvanizing support of regional organizations in matters of crime prevention and criminal justice in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Current gaps, emerging trends and new challenges
5:50 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Closing remarks by the President of the General Assembly.

A detailed programme will be available in due course.

Participants

Member States are invited to participate at the highest possible level. Representatives of UN Agencies, regional and sub-regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders will also be invited to attend.

High-level representatives of Member States (Heads of State and Government as well as Ministers) are invited to make interventions during the high-level segment in the morning from 10:30 am – 11:15 am. The **list of speakers** for the high-level segment will be established in accordance with the practice of the General Assembly, subject to the availability of time. The list of speakers will be open on 20 May 2019. For inscriptions on the list of speakers please contact the General Assembly Affairs Branch, Mr. Carlos Galindo (email: galindo@un.org; +1 (212) 963-5063), with copy to gaspeakerslist@un.org. The time limit for these statements will be three minutes for individual delegations and five minutes for statements made on behalf of a group of States.