



Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

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High-level special events

1. As part of the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in cooperation with other stakeholders, organized 11 high-level special events between 13 and 15 April 2015.

Summary

2. On 13 April 2015, UNODC, in partnership with the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group and the permanent missions of Italy and Thailand to the United Nations, organized a high-level special event on the rule of law, human rights and the post-2015 development agenda. The event brought together leading figures to discuss how “the advancement of the rule of law at the national and international levels, including through crime prevention and criminal justice mechanisms, is essential for sustained and inclusive economic growth and sustainable development and the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, all of which, in turn, reinforce the rule of law”.¹

3. The President of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, the Minister of Justice of Italy, the Minister of Justice of Thailand, senior officials of UNODC, the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as civil society expert M. Cherif Bassiouni, discussed trends and challenges relating to the application of the rule of law. They also shared good practices and highlighted areas in which they could complement each other’s efforts to support the international community in strengthening the rule of law. Panellists and participants provided recommendations as to how Member States, international organizations and civil society could best support consideration by the international community of the way forward on the post-2015 development agenda in advance of the September 2015 summit on that topic.

¹ See General Assembly resolution 68/193.



4. Also on 13 April 2015, UNODC, in partnership with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the other partners of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime, namely the International Criminal Police Organization, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization, organized a high-level event on “Wildlife and forest crime: a serious crime”. The event was opened by the President of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly and was co-hosted by the UNODC Executive Director and the Secretary-General of CITES. Fourteen speakers, representing Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions, delivered presentations on the magnitude and impact of wildlife and forest crime. Speakers reaffirmed that wildlife and forest crime was a serious and transnational form of organized crime that required shared responsibility and a balanced approach to address supply, demand and livelihoods. Speakers also highlighted the need to review and strengthen legislative frameworks to address the seriousness of wildlife and forest crime; the need to enhance law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial capacity; and the importance of working together to tackle that crime. The importance of partnerships such as the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime was emphasized, as was the need to enlist support from civil society. Speakers welcomed the adoption of the Doha Declaration, in particular the references it made to wildlife and forest crime, which highlighted the serious nature of the crime and the need for the entire criminal justice system to give it the same level of attention as other serious crimes.

5. On 14 April 2014, UNODC and the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, organized a high-level event to present the achievements of and challenges faced by the Trust Fund during the five years since its inception. The UNODC Executive Director highlighted the fact that the Trust Fund, which had been established by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/293 of 30 July 2010 as part of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, had provided \$1.7 million to 28 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in 25 countries. Eleven NGOs had provided direct, specialized assistance to around 2,000 victims of human trafficking annually over the past three years, and 17 NGO projects would start being implemented during the current year. Participants acknowledged the key role played by NGOs in providing assistance to victims and in supporting Governments to both shape and implement legislation to counter trafficking. NGO representatives from Nigeria and Nepal highlighted the difference Trust Fund grants had made to the lives of victims. They showcased stories of individual survivors who had seen their hope and human dignity restored and had acquired means to rebuild their lives. Speakers stressed that the main hurdle to the work on victim assistance was the low level of funding available. They called for increased support from the international community to the Trust Fund.

6. In a high-level event held on 14 April 2015 and chaired by the Attorney General of Qatar, top-level officials from UNODC, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNDP and OHCHR outlined the efforts being made by the United Nations to provide more effective and coherent assistance to countries in conflict and post-conflict situations through the joint global focal point for the police, justice and corrections areas in the rule of law in post-conflict and other crisis situations, by focusing on rebuilding fair and effective criminal justice systems that respected

the human rights of the accused and of victims, and that contained legitimate, transparent mechanisms whereby people could seek justice and redress.

7. The Executive Director of UNODC explained that States had repeatedly recognized the threat posed by drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism to global development, peace and security, and that there was a need to enhance international cooperation to confront those challenges. He stressed that it was now time to turn good intentions into action and invest in UNODC efforts to confront organized crime and terrorism, and to promote the rule of law, including through participation in the global focal point and through programmes on the ground in key countries and regions. The Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations provided examples of where the global focal point was making a difference. He also explained that building legitimate rule-of-law institutions was a slow and difficult process, albeit one that was absolutely necessary to break the cycle of conflict and violence. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights explained that human rights and transitional justice were at the forefront of efforts to rebuild justice and peace in post-conflict countries. The UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support explained that the rule of law was fundamental to the quality of people's lives and for the success of national development efforts. Where laws protected women from violence and discrimination, their lives were immeasurably improved, which provided them with a basis for their full social and economic empowerment. When ordinary citizens knew their rights and were able to seek and obtain justice, there was less discrimination and there were fewer human rights violations. When local communities were free from the debilitating fear of violence or intimidation, inclusive and sustainable economic development could begin to take hold.

8. At the high-level event on strengthening national and international cooperation in preventing and countering terrorist financing, held on 14 April 2015, participants discussed how combating the financing of terrorism could contribute to preventing and disrupting terrorist activities. They also reviewed ongoing counter-terrorism financing work carried out by Member States and key organizations, highlighting areas where gaps still existed, and explored the potential for capacity-building programmes. Discussions focused on the experiences of Member States, in particular the experiences of Afghanistan and States in the Middle East and North Africa region, in developing and implementing strategies for countering new forms of terrorism financing, the increasing links between terrorist groups and organized crime, and the use of criminal activities as a source of terrorist financing, including trafficking in drugs, arms, cultural property and oil, and kidnapping for ransom or for the purpose of extortion. The meeting concluded that disrupting financial flows related to terrorism remained a major challenge, one that required a comprehensive, integrated approach that reached out to all sectors and actors involved, both private and public. International cooperation was also deemed essential in those areas, as was ratifying and fully implementing the relevant United Nations instruments against terrorism and its financing.

9. Following the adoption of the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems in 2012, the Government of South Africa and Legal Aid South Africa, together with UNDP, UNODC and the International Legal Foundation, in collaboration with the Open Society Justice

Initiative, the University of Pretoria and the University of the Witwatersrand, in June 2014 hosted the first international conference to address global challenges to ensuring access by the poor to quality criminal legal aid services. At the conference, participants discussed common challenges to providing access to effective legal aid, and proposed practical and achievable solutions. In the resulting Johannesburg declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems, conference participants noted the critical importance of effective legal aid, called on States, legal aid providers and the international community to ensure the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines, and set out action points.

10. The speakers at the high-level event on the implementation of the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems: follow-up to the Johannesburg declaration, held on 14 April 2015, addressed different aspects of the declaration and of the Principles and Guidelines, acknowledging the importance of legal aid for ensuring respect for human rights, for effective criminal justice reform, and for generating legal and social change. It was recognized that legal aid was transformative and could be delivered through different models and by different providers. In particular it was mentioned that legal aid could be crucial in post-conflict societies when trying to establish public trust in the legal system, and should not be forgotten in capacity-building for justice actors (police, prosecution and the judiciary) so as to allow meaningful access to justice. Therefore, Governments should ensure sustainable funding for legal aid. Finally, it was recommended that States should use data collection and assessments to inform their legal aid policies, improve the quality of services and share experiences and lessons learned with each other.

11. On 15 April 2015, UNODC organized, in cooperation with OHCHR and the Governments of Austria, Norway and Thailand, a high-level panel discussion on violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. The event was an opportunity to present and raise awareness of the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and to gather political support from Member States in the dissemination and further implementation of that new set of international standards and norms. The discussion focused on the need to promote measures aimed at preventing and responding to violence against children who were in contact with the justice system as victims, witnesses or alleged offenders. Member States commended UNODC for having developed, with the United Nations Children's Fund, a global programme on violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, and called upon the international community to provide support to the implementation of the Programme. Keynote speeches were delivered by Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol of Thailand and Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger (Austria).

12. A high-level event on "Global data-sharing for effective investigation and prosecution in match-fixing cases: taking it from the locker room into the hands of law enforcement", organized in cooperation with the International Centre for Sport Security, was held on 15 April 2015. The event was opened by the Executive Director of UNODC, the Secretary-General of the Thirteenth Congress and the President of the International Centre for Sport Security, in the presence of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior of Qatar. During the event, a memorandum of

understanding between UNODC and the International Centre was signed. The event brought together experts from international organizations, national experts, academics and experts from the sports community and the sports-betting field. The aim of the event was to foster dialogue on the need to develop multistakeholder approaches with a view to enhancing cooperation, including data sharing, at both the domestic and international levels to protect sports against match-fixing and illegal betting.

13. Speakers agreed that there was a growing interaction between the interests of sports organizations, society and the State (i.e. the general interest), and therefore the strengthening of a framework of complementarities and shared responsibilities was needed. There was discussion on the existing links between match-fixing and other criminal activities that were identified as additional challenges for investigators and law enforcement authorities. It was stressed that match-fixing needed to be addressed through tailor-made legislative responses and effective investigative powers, particularly in view of the interrelationship of match-fixing with organized crime, corruption and money-laundering. It was underlined that intelligence, the collection of data and the sharing of information were essential to effectively combating transnational organized criminal groups, which increasingly diversified their activities and were involved in match-fixing cases for profit and/or money-laundering purposes.

14. During the high-level event on “Why do victims matter? Thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration of Basic principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power”, held on 15 April 2015, the President of the International Criminal Court (appearing in a video message), representatives of the Governments of Australia, Canada and Sweden, and senior representatives of UNODC, OHCHR, UNDP and the World Health Organization, as well as representatives of the World Society of Victimology, the International Organization for Victim Assistance and the International Victimology Institute Tilburg, celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power.² The audience observed a minute of silence in memory of the 400 migrants who had recently died off the coast of Libya and for the more than 1,400 persons who died every day as a result of interpersonal violence.

15. Panellists explained that the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power had been a landmark text which had inspired further developments, such as the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,³ the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto and the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The standards and norms pertaining to victims at the national and international levels had improved. Victims had been given a voice. However, there was much left to be done. Having all available services under one roof and continuing to be vigilant in making sure that the needs of victims were not lost sight of while the focus was on the offender were essential for moving forward. The partners were committed to making additional efforts, in particular to provide support and assistance to victims of conflict, victims of sexual and gender-based violence and child victims, by implementing the Guidelines on Justice in Matters

² General Assembly resolution 40/34, annex.

³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2187, No. 38544.

involving Victims and Witnesses of Crime. Good practices existed around the world, and the international community could ensure that victims' rights were upheld and that victims received redress, reparation and compensation.

16. The event on "Towards universal implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption: the Institutional Integrity Initiative and the Implementation Review Mechanism" was also held on 15 April 2015. It addressed the implementation of the Convention against Corruption, both at the organizational level by the United Nations and at the national level by States parties. The Executive Director of UNODC presented the report of the Institutional Integrity Initiative, which identified both good practices and key recommendations for members of the United Nations family wishing to improve their integrity practices. Panellists further mentioned efforts made by the Secretariat, UNDP and the International Anti-Corruption Academy to strengthen institutional integrity within their organizations. Representatives of UNODC, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption delivered presentations on the progress, findings and impact of the implementation review mechanisms of the different international anti-corruption conventions.

17. Lastly, on 15 April 2015, the UNODC Maritime Crime Programme organized a high-level event on heroin trafficking on the high seas in the Indian Ocean. The panel leading the discussion included the Minister of Justice of Sri Lanka, the Minister of Home Affairs of Seychelles, the Deputy Commander of the Combined Maritime Forces, the UNODC Executive Director and the head of the Maritime Crime Programme. The deliberations focused on the rapid growth of heroin trafficking on the southern maritime route from the Makran coast of Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan to East Africa and South Asia, and the intelligence-led detections made on the high seas by the Combined Maritime Forces. The legal enforcement limitations on the high seas and the absence of protections in the region were also discussed. The Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime, a new initiative of the Maritime Crime Programme, was welcomed as an essential mechanism to develop regional cooperation and information sharing among Indian Ocean States to counter transnational maritime crime.