Seventy-eighth session
Item 110 of the preliminary list*
Crime prevention and criminal justice


Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/231, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-eighth session a report on the implementation of that resolution. It contains a summary of the deliberations at the thirty-second session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which was held in Vienna from 22 to 26 May 2023, on the follow-up to the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and preparations for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The report also contains an overview of the action taken by the Commission, as the preparatory and follow-up body for the United Nations crime congresses, and of the activities conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in follow-up to the Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Pursuant to the resolution, the report further includes information on proposals submitted by Member States in relation to the overall theme, agenda items and workshop topics for the Fifteenth Congress.
I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/231, entitled “Follow-up to the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and preparations for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-eighth session a report on the implementation of that resolution.

2. In its resolution, the General Assembly reiterated its invitation to Governments to take into consideration the Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2021 by the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, when formulating legislation and policy directives and to make every effort, where appropriate, to implement the principles contained therein, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

3. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in accordance with its mandate, to continue implementing the appropriate policy and operational measures for the follow-up to the Kyoto Declaration, including through the holding of intersessional thematic discussions to facilitate the sharing of information, good practices and lessons learned among Member States and relevant stakeholders, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources.

4. Also in the same resolution, the Assembly decided to hold the Fifteenth Congress in 2026, without prejudice to the timing of subsequent United Nations crime congresses and with a view to maintaining the five-year cycle of the congresses, in the light of the intensive follow-up process undertaken by the Commission in the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration.

5. In its resolution, the General Assembly also invited Member States to provide their suggestions in relation to the overall theme, the agenda items and the topics for the workshops for the Fifteenth Congress, and requested the Secretary-General to include those suggestions in the report on the follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress and preparations for the Fifteenth Congress to be submitted to the Commission at its thirty-second session.

6. Also in its resolution, the General Assembly recommended that, building on the experience and the success of the Fourteenth Congress, all efforts be made to ensure that the overall theme, the agenda items and the topics for the workshops for the Fifteenth Congress were interrelated and that the agenda items and workshop topics were streamlined and limited in number, and it encouraged the holding of side events that were focused on and complemented the agenda items and workshops.

7. The present report provides a summary of the deliberations at the thirty-second session of the Commission, which was held in Vienna from 22 to 26 May 2023, on the follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress and the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress. It contains an overview of the action taken by the Commission, as the preparatory and follow-up body for the United Nations crime congresses, and of the activities conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in follow-up to the Kyoto Declaration. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of the resolution, the report further includes information on proposals submitted by Member States in relation to the overall theme, the agenda items and the topics for the workshops for the Fifteenth Congress.

8. The report complements the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress and preparations for the Fifteenth Congress (E/CN.15/2023/11), which was considered by the Commission at its thirty-second session.
II. Follow-up to the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

A. Consideration by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its thirty-second session**

9. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/231, the Commission reviewed the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration at its thirty-second session – the first session of the Commission that the President of the General Assembly had ever attended – under the standing item on its agenda entitled “Follow-up to the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and preparations for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”.

10. Under that agenda item, the Commission had before it, for its consideration, the relevant report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.15/2023/11) containing an overview of the action taken by the Commission and the activities conducted by UNODC in follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress and providing information on the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress. The report also contained information on proposals submitted by Member States in relation to the overall theme, the agenda items and the topics for the workshops for the Fifteenth Congress. Lastly, it included recommendations, including with regard to the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress.

11. The Commission also considered a conference room paper containing additional proposals on the overall theme, the agenda items and the topics for the workshops for the Fifteenth Congress (E/CN.15/2023/CRP.5).

12. In addition, the Commission considered a conference room paper containing the Chair’s summary on the thematic discussions of the Commission on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration (E/CN.15/2023/CRP.1). Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/181 and to effectively follow up on the Kyoto Declaration, the Commission had held the second round of thematic discussions, focusing on the second pillar of the Kyoto Declaration (Advancing the criminal justice system), from 5 to 7 December 2022. An interactive exchange had been facilitated among national experts and policymakers, United Nations system entities, intergovernmental organizations and civil society on good practices, challenges and lessons learned in advancing criminal justice.

13. At its thirty-second session, the Commission held, in line with Economic and Social Council decision 2022/317, a thematic discussion on enhancing the functioning of the criminal justice system to ensure access to justice and to realize a safe and secure society. A note by the Secretariat containing a discussion guide for the thematic discussion had been prepared to facilitate dialogue and the exchange of information (E/CN.15/2023/6).

14. To facilitate consideration of the agenda item on the follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress and preparations for the Fifteenth Congress, introductory statements were made by the Secretary of the Commission and a representative of the secretariat of the Commission. Statements were made by the representative of Japan, as the host country of the Fourteenth Congress, and by the observer for the United Arab Emirates, as the host country of the Fifteenth Congress. Statements were also made by the representatives of Armenia, Canada, China, Egypt, Norway, the Sudan (on behalf of the Group of African States), Thailand and the United States of America. The observers for the Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the

Treatment of Offenders and the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice also made statements.

15. Appreciation was expressed to Japan as the host country of the Fourteenth Congress for its leading efforts in the implementation of the outcome of the Congress. A number of delegations welcomed the efforts undertaken by UNODC and Member States since the adoption of the Kyoto Declaration. The holistic and integrated approach taken by the Commission in follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress was commended. Reference was made to the annual intersessional thematic discussions of the Commission, including the second round of discussions, which had been held in December 2022. The enhanced contribution of other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, and the Council itself, to the thematic discussions was welcomed.

16. Some speakers reported on their countries’ efforts to implement the commitments contained in the Kyoto Declaration, including with regard to implementing United Nations standards and norms; empowering young people in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice; safeguarding victims’ rights and protecting witnesses; countering smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons; mainstreaming a gender perspective in criminal justice policies; preventing and countering corruption; and preventing and combating terrorism. Information was also shared on the steps taken at the national level to strengthen the criminal justice system, including reducing recidivism through rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

17. The importance of providing adequate and sustainable funding to enhance the provision of capacity-building and technical assistance to developing countries in the implementation of international commitments aimed at strengthening the criminal justice system was reiterated.

B. Other relevant activities led by the Chair of the Commission at its thirty-second session***

18. The Commission has further promoted the policy commitments contained in the Kyoto Declaration. On the margins of its thirty-second session, the Chair of the Commission held two high-level special events on topics closely related to the substantive scope of the Declaration.

19. The first special event, held on 22 May 2023, focused on the theme “Achieving SDG 16: the contribution by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”. The event, which was held in honour of the visit by the President of the General Assembly to the Commission, called upon Governments to strengthen their efforts towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and to identify synergies for the way forward. Participants shared their experience in reviewing progress made in relation to the indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and innovative initiatives launched in support of the achievement of the Goal.

20. On 23 May 2023, the Chair of the Commission, in cooperation with the Government of Japan, held the second special event, on the theme “Addressing challenges in the treatment of offenders: the practical application of existing United Nations standards and norms and towards the development of the United Nations standards and norms on reducing reoffending”. The event was an opportunity to take stock of and showcase key initiatives and efforts undertaken by Member States and UNODC in relation to the treatment of offenders. It was also an opportunity to provide advice to Member States on how to better apply existing United Nations standards

*** Under this section of the report, information is provided on special and side events organized by the Chair of the Commission in follow-up to the outcome of the Fourteenth Congress and at meetings of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.
and norms and reflect on possible topics for consideration during the development of the new United Nations standards and norms in the area.

21. On 15 June 2023, at the high-level debate of the General Assembly on the theme “Equal access to justice for all: advancing reforms for peaceful, just and inclusive societies”, the Chair of the Commission informed the Assembly about the work accomplished by the Commission at its thirty-second session, including action taken in relation to a number of resolutions focused on, inter alia, reducing reoffending, taking action against trafficking in persons, technical assistance in the area of counter-terrorism and equal access to justice for all. The Chair also took the opportunity to invite Member States and other partners to the third round of thematic discussions on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration to be held in 2023, which would be devoted to the topic “Promoting the rule of law” and cover issues such as access to justice and equal treatment before the law, access to legal aid, and effective, accountable, impartial and inclusive institutions.

22. In addition, the Chair of the Crime Commission, together with the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and in line with the commitments of the Kyoto Declaration, will host a side event on the margins of the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development. The event will serve as an opportunity to explore, inter alia, the possible future use of innovative measures in the area of justice initiated during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and promoted within the Crime Commission.

C. Action taken by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

23. UNODC continued to ensure a comprehensive approach to the follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress. The previously established interdivisional task team continued to hold regular meetings to strengthen Office-wide coordination and cooperation in the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration and in the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress. The task team also continued to populate and update the implementation matrix it had developed that provides a comprehensive overview of activities undertaken by UNODC and its partners in support of the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration.

24. UNODC further disseminated the e-learning tool on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration developed by the secretariat of the Commission. Furthermore, in order to ensure appropriate and meaningful follow-up to the Kyoto Declaration, the secretariat of the Commission developed an interactive Kyoto Declaration follow-up portal, which contains the statements and presentations made by Member States and other stakeholders during the thematic discussions on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration since 2021. The portal allows stakeholders to search for the latest trends and insights from experts and practitioners working in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. Launched at the thirty-second session of the Commission, the portal will also serve as a useful tool in the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress.

25. In addition to facilitating the institutional follow-up within the Commission, the Office carried out a wide range of programmatic activities in implementing the Kyoto Declaration, including the provision of technical assistance to requesting Member States in various substantive areas.

1 Available at https://elearningunodc.org/course/view.php?id=42.
3 See also E/CN.15/2023/11.
III. Preparations for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

A. Member States’ proposals in relation to the overall theme, agenda items and workshop topics for the Fifteenth Congress

26. Pursuant to the invitation contained in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 77/231, the secretariat of the Commission issued notes verbales on 11 November 2022 and 30 January 2023 requesting Member States to submit proposals in relation to the overall theme, the agenda items and the topics for the workshops for the Fifteenth Congress.

27. Proposals received by the deadline of 10 February 2023 were included in the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress and preparations for the Fifteenth Congress (E/CN.15/2023/11). Proposals received after 10 February 2023 and proposals that could not be reflected in the aforementioned report because of the word count limit were submitted to the Commission at its thirty-second session in a conference room paper (E/CN.15/2023/CRP.5).4

28. On the basis of the suggestions submitted by Member States, a composite proposal was developed by the Chair of the Commission, preserving links and a logical flow between the overall theme, the four agenda items and the four workshop topics. The Chair’s proposal was subject to negotiation by Member States in the lead-up to the thirty-second session.

B. Consideration by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its thirty-second session

29. Many speakers expressed their appreciation to the Chair of the Commission and to the Government of Japan for the tabling of a resolution on the follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress and the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress. Several speakers welcomed the adoption of a comprehensive and forward-looking overall theme for the Fifteenth Congress, emphasizing the importance of accelerating efforts to strengthen crime prevention and criminal justice responses in the context of the broader global agenda. It was highlighted that the Fifteenth Congress would set the stage for shaping the global framework regarding crime prevention and criminal justice in the critical period leading up to the final review of the 2030 Agenda.

30. Many speakers expressed their appreciation to the Government of the United Arab Emirates as the host country of the Fifteenth Congress and reaffirmed their support in the preparatory process. The importance of building upon the success of the Fourteenth Congress in the preparations for the next Congress was underscored.

31. The focus of the agenda of the Fifteenth Congress on, in ter alia, new, emerging and evolving forms of transnational organized crime was welcomed. The importance of discussing pertinent challenges, including cybercrime, corruption, gender-based violence and crimes that affect the environment was mentioned. Continuing the discussion on the development and implementation of evidence-based crime prevention and criminal justice policies was regarded as essential.

32. Several speakers emphasized the valuable expertise of civil society and academia in supporting the global efforts by Member States to address existing and emerging crime prevention and criminal justice challenges. The role of the United Nations crime congresses as forums for the exchange of views among a broad range of participants was highlighted.

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4 For Member States’ replies containing more than eight proposals for agenda items and workshop topics, only the first eight proposals were reflected in the report (E/CN.15/2023/11). The additional proposals (beyond the first eight) were reflected in the conference room paper (E/CN.15/2023/CRP.5).
C. Action taken by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its thirty-second session

33. On Thursday, 25 May 2023, the Commission took action on the draft resolution, entitled “Follow-up to the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and preparations for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”, and recommended, through the Economic and Social Council, its adoption by the General Assembly. In that resolution, the General Assembly would welcome with appreciation the offer of the Government of the United Arab Emirates to host the Fifteenth Congress, to be held in 2026.

34. The General Assembly would decide that the main theme of the Fifteenth Congress would be “Accelerating crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: protecting people and planet and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the digital age”.

35. The General Assembly would approve the following provisional agenda for the Fifteenth Congress:

1. Opening of the Congress.
2. Organizational matters.
3. Advancing innovative and evidence-based crime prevention strategies towards social, economic and environmental development.
4. Promoting people-centred, inclusive and responsive criminal justice systems in a world of continuous change.
5. Addressing and countering crime – including organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations – in new, emerging and evolving forms.
6. Working better together to elevate cooperation and partnerships, including technical and material assistance and training, at the national, regional and international levels, in crime prevention and criminal justice.
7. Adoption of the report of the Congress.

36. Furthermore, the General Assembly would decide that the following issues would be considered in workshops within the framework of the Fifteenth Congress:

(a) Building resilient societies, with a focus on protecting women, children and youth: fostering engagement, education and the culture of lawfulness;
(b) Ensuring equal access to justice for all: towards safe and secure societies while respecting the rule of law;
(c) Getting ahead: strengthening data collection and analysis to better protect people and planet in times of new, emerging and evolving forms of crime;
(d) Turning the digital age into an opportunity: promoting the responsible use of technologies in crime prevention and criminal justice.

37. The Assembly would decide that the duration of the Fifteenth Congress should not exceed eight days, including pre-Congress consultations.

38. Furthermore, the Assembly would decide that the Fifteenth Congress would open with a high-level segment, at which States would be invited to be represented at the highest possible level, for example, by Heads of State or Government, government ministers or attorneys general, and that representatives would be given an opportunity to make statements on the topics of the Congress.

39. It would also decide that the Fifteenth Congress would adopt a single declaration, to be submitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice for its consideration.
40. The General Assembly would request the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network, to prepare a discussion guide for the regional preparatory meetings for the Fifteenth Congress and for the Congress itself in a timely manner in order to enable those meetings to be held as early as possible in 2025, and would invite Member States to be actively involved in that process.

41. The General Assembly would also request the Secretary-General to facilitate the organization of the regional preparatory meetings and to make available the necessary resources for the participation of the least developed countries in those meetings and in the Fifteenth Congress itself, in accordance with past practice and in consultation with Member States.

42. Furthermore, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to facilitate the organization of ancillary meetings of non-governmental and professional organizations participating in the Fifteenth Congress, in accordance with past practice, as well as meetings of professional and geographical interest groups, and to take appropriate measures to encourage the participation of the academic and research community in the Congress, and would encourage Member States to actively participate in the above-mentioned meetings, as they provide an opportunity to develop and maintain strong partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations.

43. Lastly, the General Assembly would request the Commission to accord sufficient time at its thirty-third session to reviewing the progress made in the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress, to finalize in a timely manner all outstanding organizational and substantive arrangements and to make its recommendations to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council.

IV. Concluding observations

44. The Kyoto Declaration continues to be the main international political commitment on crime prevention and criminal justice, guiding global action in that regard. I encourage the Commission to take further comprehensive action in follow-up to the Declaration, including through the continued organization of intersessional thematic discussions to foster the exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned among Member States, United Nations entities, other intergovernmental organizations and civil society. I call upon Member States to actively participate in the follow-up process.

45. I encourage the Commission to further disseminate information on the policy commitments contained in the Kyoto Declaration and on the action taken in follow-up to the Declaration, including on the margins of meetings of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

46. In the Kyoto Declaration, Member States reaffirmed the role of UNODC as the leading entity of the United Nations supporting Member States in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. UNODC will further strengthen institutional coordination and cooperation with all other relevant actors in order to ensure a comprehensive approach to the follow-up to the Fourteenth Congress, and continue to implement programmatic activities with a view to supporting Member States in the implementation of the commitments contained in the Kyoto Declaration and keep Member States informed of the work undertaken in that regard.

47. I invite the Commission to give consideration, in the light of the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress, to the methodological approach followed in the preparations for the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Congresses. That approach was based on the delineation of three distinct but logically interrelated phases of the congresses (preparation; conduct; and outcomes of the congresses and follow-up thereto).
48. I encourage the Commission to give due consideration to the need for advanced planning and close coordination with all parties involved in the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress, including the relevant counterparts of the host country.

49. I also encourage the Commission to consider the added value of the important contributions made to the congresses by non-governmental organizations and by individual experts, as reflected in the growing number of ancillary meetings held during recent congresses.

50. I stress the relevance of cooperation with the institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network in the preparations for the Fifteenth Congress, including in the development of a discussion guide for the regional preparatory meetings for the Fifteenth Congress and for the Congress itself.