

Concluding remarks

Most speakers highlighted trends and developments of criminal activity in their respective national contexts - Developments in law enforcement and legislation were also discussed.

In quantitative terms, we have seen that crime rates may increase or decrease depending on specific social and economic circumstances. Countries, which enjoy political, economic and socio-cultural stability, may be characterized by relatively stable crime rates. Vice-versa, less stable countries may experience ascending crime rates. However, representatives of countries were almost unanimous in drawing attention not so much to quantitative aspects of crime as the changing characteristics of criminal activity. The main focus of most presentations was the new forms of organized transnational crime.

We have seen that the threat posed by these new forms of crime is to be located in developments taking place in the political and economic international arena. In this respect, some negative effects of globalization were identified. The global opening of markets may generate wealth while increasing inequality. The growing gap between affluent and disadvantaged countries encourages migration, and receiving countries are often unprepared to guarantee rights to the newcomers. Movement of goods and persons across borders has increased dramatically over recent years and opportunities for criminal groups to illegally move goods and persons have simultaneously increased. Among the worries expressed is that the growth of transnational crime activity is accompanied by a corollary of illegal acts such as corruption of officials and money laundering.

In brief, speakers have dealt with crimes in the street as well as crimes of the elites, namely, conventional crime and economic crime.

Among the most relevant points featuring in the presentations, were those related to policies, with some speakers emphasizing deterrence and others prevention. Rehabilitation programmes were described and strongly advocated. Aspects of social prevention were pinpointed and the participation of communities in preventative strategies was stressed. It was felt that experiences have to be shared, successful strategies disseminated and international cooperation strengthened. Mention was made of the UN Convention against Transnational Crime and of its potential importance for the harmonization of anti-crime measures. Among the common features, a need for reorienting the criminal justice system towards the victims of crime was strongly felt.

The Secretariat would like to thank all participants for sharing with us their concerns and attempting to identify common strategies to combat crime, and all countries, which are providing invaluable support for our global programmes