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**ITEM 5: Effective crime prevention: keeping pace with new developments**  
**Finnish national statement**

During this Tenth United Nations Congress, we have heard a great deal about transnational organized crime. However, to an overwhelming degree, the problems that people face with crime and safety tend to be quite local. Generally, such problems can and should be dealt with through a grass-roots response.

It is an error to think that local "every-day criminality" on one hand, and transnational organized crime on the other, are quite distinct matters. Certainly, we need a variety of tools to deal with transnational organized crime, including international instruments and co-operation. However, even serious transnational crime does not develop by itself. It evolves from local and national crime. It originates within national confines and in the conditions in that country, where it can often be pinpointed more precisely, for example in the urban areas where marginalised youth are to be found. For this reason, in the long run measures that prevent people from being recruited into crime in general will also prevent transnational organized crime. Similarly, measures that are designed to reduce the number of suitable opportunities for crime will prevent crimes that are committed both by individual citizens and by criminal organizations, or will make the commission of such crimes less attractive or profitable.

Crime prevention involves a series of value judgments. Finland appreciates the international work that has been carried out to draft principles for responsible crime prevention. I would like to take this opportunity to express Finland's appreciation to the Government of Argentina for its significant contribution in organizing the recent meeting in Buenos Aires. The National Crime Prevention Programme that was adopted by the Government of Finland one year ago can be seen to be in line to quite a large extent with the draft principles for responsible crime prevention that were worked out in Buenos Aires. Copies of the Finnish National Crime Prevention Programme are available here in an English translation, and in this

connection I shall not give you a detailed presentation. Nonetheless, there are two fundamental principles in the National Crime Prevention Programme that I do wish to emphasize. First, all public decisions should take into account their impact on crime, regardless of whether these decisions are taken on the national or on the local level, and regardless of what policy or administrative sector is responsible for taking the decision. Matters should not be examined only from a narrow perspective. Decisions taken in one sector have a tendency to affect other sectors, and this should be considered in crime prevention. For example when administrative cut-backs have to be made in order to balance the budget, we should examine not only the short-term financial savings but also the possible long-term impact on the development of crime. In particular cut-backs in youth work and education may later prove to be costly for society.

Second, the Finnish National Crime Prevention Programme emphasizes crime prevention on the local level as co-operation among the local municipality, its administrative agencies, the local State authorities, the private sector and the so-called third sector, civil society. The responsibility for crime prevention does not belong to the authorities alone, it belongs to everyone. Indeed, Finland's National Crime Prevention Programme is entitled "Working together for a safe society".

It is precisely local crime prevention and the fundamental role of schools in this work that are the central elements of Finland's National Crime Prevention Programme. The Programme emphasizes that the most effective approach is to seek to influence local problems on the local level. Local action is needed to change an environment that facilitates or attracts the commission of crime. It is on the local level that one is best able to identify the factors that call for early intervention into the psycho-social development of children and youth. - The same emphasis on the local level can be seen for example in the national crime prevention programmes in Sweden and the United Kingdom. Indeed, we can say that this approach embodies what the international body of experts on crime prevention would regard as best practice, as their opinion of where the emphasis should be in crime prevention.

It is of course important to develop and adopt a national crime prevention programme, but it is even more important to ensure that such a programme is implemented in practice. This point was taken into consideration already when the Finnish National Crime Prevention Programme was being drafted. Those groups and organizations that we hoped would commit themselves to the implementation of the programme were widely represented in the drafting of the programme. These representatives of groups

and organizations had their own concrete interest in developing a programme that would work in practice. By giving wide publication to their expert contribution to the programme, we could also get the municipalities and the schools to understand that this was "their" programme, and not for example a set of rules that had been handed down from on high from the national government.

Our assessment is that the implementation of the Finnish National Crime Prevention Programme is off to a good start. The preparation of the programme has initiated a process that has widely promoted commitment to co-operation in the reduction of crime and the improvement of safety. People have also begun to understand that it is important not only to seek to prevent crime but also to seek to prevent crime in the proper way. As we come to learn more and more about different measures that can be used to reduce the amount of crime, we are better able to assess the degree to which these different measures actually do reduce crime. At the same time, we have learned more about the possible negative side-effects of the different measures. For example we know that even if a media campaign may lead to a short-term reduction in some types of crime, it may at the same time increase the feeling of a lack of safety. Another example is that various technical crime prevention measures may raise false expectations that modern technology will solve all our problems, even though safety ultimately is a question of inter-personal relationships.

I would like to conclude by noting that the "Elements of Responsible Crime Prevention" drafted in Buenos Aires is an important document. Finland warmly recommends that the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice consider its adoption. However, we hope that two points in the draft could be addressed. One point is that we hope that the core of the concept of crime prevention should be defined as the prevention of the direct and indirect material and immaterial harm that crime causes to victims and society. This point affects the priorities of crime prevention and the assessment of its effectiveness. Moreover, it links crime prevention measures with measures to support victims of crime.

We would also like to emphasize the problems that arise when crime prevention measures lead to social segregation and, more generally, when they seek to make certain premises, activities, residential areas or local communities off-limits to those individuals and groups who are regarded as difficult or as threats. In the long run, such an approach to crime prevention can not strengthen civil society which is, ultimately, the foundation of safety. For this reason we would suggest that the "basic principles" section of the draft

includes a statement along the lines of "crime prevention should not promote stigmatisation or social segregation, unduly reduce the quality of life nor limit personal privacy, freedom or rights". At present, the draft principles only note in connection with situational crime prevention that they should not unduly weaken the quality of the built-up environment or limit access to public buildings or services. In our view what is at issue is a more general principle raised by problems connected with crime prevention measures that promote segregation, a general principle that should be taken into consideration not only when planning urban areas but also, for example, when planning how schooling should be provided, how technological crime prevention measures should be implemented and how youth work should be developed. At least in Finnish crime prevention this is a fundamental principle.