

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR PM MADUNA, MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA ON HIS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT OF THE 10th UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS ON THE PREVENTION. OF CRIME AND TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS, VIENNA 10-17 APRIL 2000.

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, Ms Louise Frechette,

Executive Director of the Centre for Crime, Prof. Arlacchi,

Ladies & Gentlemen

Allow me to begin by thanking you all for bestowing upon South Africa the honour of presiding over this Congress. I am particularly grateful to the Group of 77 and China for supporting me and thank my continent, Africa, for choosing me to be its candidate for the Presidency. For South Africa, the decision by Africa to avail itself through me to preside over this Congress is in itself a reflection of both the renaissance and renewed confidence of our giant continent as it rises to take its place in the world's community of nations. Furthermore for us as South Africans, a people recently emerged from the bondage of apartheid, it represents a recognition of the firm foundation we have established for combating crime to secure human rights and democracy in our country.

Your Excellencies and distinguished delegates

Allow me also to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his message to

us delivered by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms Louise Frechette giving direction to this Congress. We are equally grateful to the regional groups for the extensive preparations they made for this Congress. No doubt proposals will be made for capacity building, cooperation and mutual assistance which will both give direction and enrich our discussions.

This Congress takes place at a critical juncture in the history of humanity. Not only is it the first of UN congresses to be held this century, it also takes place at a time when technological advances are opening more opportunities for the criminals and crime is becoming evermore complex in its scope and proportions, thereby threatening the very foundations and stability of nations. The challenge for Member States is therefore, to find creative, workable and credible solutions to strengthen multilateral efforts to combat crime. Indeed, the mandate given to this Congress by the General Assembly in its Resolution 53/110 of 9 December 1998 is to address these challenges and collectively through multilateralism, to meet both the complexities and the proportions of crime in the 21st century.

This Congress, once again, affords us an opportunity for periodic stock-taking, to exchange ideas, experiences, data and other information on promoting and strengthening the rule of law and developments in criminal justice in order to enable us to face current and future challenges more effectively and efficiently. The Agenda of the Congress also requires us to address international cooperation in combating transnational crime in the twenty-first century, effective crime prevention in the light of new technological developments and fair treatment of offenders and victims in the justice system in the coming days. Delegations will have the opportunity to have more detailed discussions on some of these themes in

Committees and workshops that will follow plenary discussions. In discussing the significance of crime prevention as an instrument of promoting human rights and security, we will have to define the relationship between the promotion of the rule of law, human rights and democracy, on the one hand and sustainable development, on the other. Thus, for us as nations and people gathered here today, the fight against crime goes beyond the issues of law and order. It goes to the core of a just and democratic society the realisation of which we are all committed to promote. If it is time that crime thrives in conditions of squalor and grime, we also need to discuss what we may do about such conditions.

Distinguished delegates

This Congress also reaffirms that crime prevention requires international cooperation and coordinated strategies. The impact of crime transcends national boundaries. Crime, the enemy we all face, knows and respects no boundaries and carries not passport. Consequently, any approach if it is to be effective, particularly at a multilateral level, must take this into account. The recent technological advances together with ever increasing globalisation have made the international community ever interdependent to the extent that weaknesses in one part of our planet can only be ignored to the peril of the entirety of humanity. Equally, strengths in one part of the universe are easily encumbered and put in jeopardy by weaknesses elsewhere.

At the same time we need to recognise that crime affects countries in different ways. It is in this context that the political declaration which will be adopted at the end of this Congress offers us an opportunity to agree on a general framework for the way forward in preparation for the Millennium Assembly, and to express our resolve to combat crime

effectively as the international community. It will also give us a chance to truly evolve complementary and global solutions.

Allow me in this regard to express my thanks to Member States for the preliminary work done on the draft declaration and congratulate them for the spirit of cooperation and accommodation that has prevailed hitherto. I am certain that Member States will have a document ready for consideration and endorsement by the high-level segment. The high-level segment is not only a novel and unique feature in the history of these Congresses, but also to the extent that it brings together the most senior leadership from Member States is an indication of our seriousness and determination to deal with crime.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Member States for the work done thus far on the Draft International Convention on Transnational Organised Crime and its protocols. We must not be disheartened by the fact that this work is not complete yet. Although we cannot ourselves at this Congress delve into the specifics of the Draft Convention and its Protocols, we can however express our encouragement and urge further progress, the participation by all Member States and provide guidance on its implementation when it eventually comes into force. Critical in this regard will be the need to take into account the needs of different categories of countries particularly with regard to securing political stability and promoting sustainable development. The Convention on Transnational Organised Crime together with its Protocols, soon to be followed by the Convention on Corruption will no doubt on completion, put the international community in a stronger position to strengthen global efforts against crime.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates

The fact that we are gathered here as Member States is in itself proof of the dynamism and importance of multilateralism to the performance of our great task. As developing countries that some of us represent here, we stand firmer on multilateralism and can only be empowered by collective action. Let the success of this Congress speak to the continued need to strengthen multilateral action, particularly in the area of crime.

In conclusion, let me thank you all again for electing me and the other members of the bureau to steer the work of this Congress. This is a collective enterprise the success of which depends on the collective will of the Member States in which I have all the confidence that we will send a strong message to assure our citizenry globally that we are seriously and earnestly committed to take the war to the criminal element confronting humanity. Our tolerance for crime has dropped to zero and our collective will refuse to bend to the will of villainy.

I am certain that, with your support the Congress will be a resounding success. It must be a success for nothing can beat the collective will of Member States when they are determined to show that they mean business in tackling serious issues such as crime which threaten not only the security of our nations, but also civilisation as we know it.

I thank you.