

AGENDA ITEM 5
EFFECTIVE CRIME PREVENTION: KEEPING PACE
WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS
STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Chairperson

By attending this conference on crime prevention, we have all acknowledged that we cannot deal with the high levels of crime, which affect us through law enforcement alone. More and more countries are finding that law enforcement on its own is both ineffective and unaffordable. We therefore recognise that the prevention of crime is and must be a primary strategic drive, if we wish to significantly reduce levels of crime and criminal violence. This is true as much of transnational organised crime as, it is of rape or homicide.

What are the key issues in crime prevention?

First, we must understand the -nature of the crimes we are dealing with and the risk factors involved. We must continuously monitor and analyse crime and the success or failure of our responses and attempts at prevention, so that our programmes become better targeted and better constructed.

Secondly, we must accept that crime prevention is not something, which can be done by law enforcement agencies alone. It requires the involvement and mobilisation of all sectors: law enforcement agencies, government departments, local government, business, communities and civil society. This is a relatively new concept, and something that we sometimes pay lip service to without really trying to implement it. Unless the population is conscientized about the need for the prevention of crime and violence and their role in it, we will continue to see the growth of gangs and syndicates, of violence, of rape, of drug trafficking.

We must emphasise the idea of compliance with the law. If 99% of our population respect a law and comply with it, we can enforce the law against the 1% who don't. If, on the other hand, the majority of our population feel that it is legitimate to do whatever they can get away with, we cannot enforce the law because we will never have the resources to do so.

Local government plays a crucial role in this process. It is close to communities and civil society, and so is well placed to play a leading role in mobilising them. In South Africa we are working with the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council to develop an Urban Safety Strategy. The intention of this is to develop common strategic objectives for the Council, the SA Police Service, government departments at national, provincial and local level, and community organisations. We intend to make crime prevention part of the core business of both the Metropolitan Council and of the SA Police Service, and of the relevant

government departments, rather than something which is peripheral and fragmented. We are rolling out a similar model in other cities and towns.

Crime and violence impact on development. Our ability to deliver services and infrastructure to our people, to improve their quality of life, and to develop income generation in our communities is significantly affected by crime and violence. If we don't feel safe in our streets and houses, our quality of life is poor. If our people don't trust government or the police or business because they are corrupt, we cannot develop good governance and social and economic development.

When we look at development, we must focus especially on vulnerable groups: women, children, the elderly and young people. There is no question that rape and domestic violence cannot be eliminated by policing and prosecution alone. They cannot be eliminated unless they become socially unacceptable, and until the vast majority of our communities are prepared, to work with the police, the victims and the offenders to reduce the risk factors and to improve enforcement.

How do we prevent motor vehicle crime or burglary? If people are prepared to buy spare car parts from young boys who do not own spares shops, we simply encourage those young boys to go out and steal or hijack more cars. When we buy guns or TVs through the back door, we encourage these same young boys to break into houses and businesses and to steal the TVs and guns. We have taken steps in South Africa to close the market for stolen and hijacked motor vehicles by

securing the vehicle registration process, by securing the vehicle's identity, by closing our borders more effectively to stolen vehicles, and by closing down the spare parts shops and scrap yards which sell stolen parts and second hand cars. This has required the participation of many government departments, as well as the insurance, banking and motor manufacturing industries. We must extend this prevention to changing people's attitudes.

This issue of increasing the respect for law is central. To do that, both government and business have to set an example. We cannot tolerate corruption. We must be determined to have zero tolerance of corruption, whether it be in politics, in law enforcement, in government or in business. Corruption undermines everything we do or try to do to prevent crime and to increase respect for law.

Disorganised and disunited communities cannot stand up against criminals and crime. They cannot retake the streets, because as individuals, every member of a community can be intimidated and silenced, especially if there is even a hint of police corruption. Communities must participate in crime prevention in co-operation with government.

Our drive to consolidate crime prevention must recognise the importance of reducing poverty and deprivation. This was spelt out at the Cairo Conference. Poverty is a key risk factor for crime. Social delivery and the provision of services and opportunities for the masses of people are a necessary condition for the reduction of crime in most

countries. We cannot preach to our people about not stealing and robbing, and tell them to respect the law, when they see no future for themselves other than crime, and when their homes and communities are dysfunctional, and riddled with alcohol, drugs, unemployment and hopelessness. We cannot expect young people to stay away from gangs when we do not provide the educational and psychiatric support to enable them to stay in schools and to actually obtain an education which allows them to have some prospects for a future and for income generation. Perhaps more important than anything else, we must confront the problem of how we treat our children in the crucial ages from 0 to 3, when they and their attitudes are formed and their ability to succeed in the world is formed. We must be able to train young people in science and mathematics, to give them a chance in the new society.

In the South Africa context we have identified certain urban areas in South Africa, which have very high levels of crime together with very high levels of poverty and deprivation. We have started working on eight of these areas as pilot projects. We are mobilising all national government departments together with provincial and local government, to invest in these areas in accordance with a framework: Improved service delivery in law enforcement and victim empowerment; targeted programmes in social, developmental and situational crime prevention; income generating activities and opportunities for single mothers and young people, and the provision of services which facilitate income generation, such as electricity and

telephones. The leadership for each area has been delegated to the provincial and local authorities.

Most developing countries, ours included, struggle to deal with these issues because of lack of resources. The developed world has a duty to help. The process of colonisation denuded us of resources and development, and created a debt, which is owed by the former colonisers to the colonised. If we don't recognise this truth, it is going to be difficult to give meaning to crime prevention.

Of course, much crime does not arise from need: it arises from greed. The syndicates grow because they see a market, they see recruits, they can exploit the weakness of our law enforcement and of our criminal justice systems, and they can exploit corruption. Many of the developing countries urgently need technical and other assistance to strengthen their criminal justice systems and policing, as well as to implement the new laws and institutions which are needed to combat organised crime groups and organised crime activities. The technical tools which are required, such as AFIS, DNA databases and integrated justice systems, will need appreciable technical support.

What should we do in practice to prevent crime and criminal violence?

We are targeting first the most vulnerable sectors. Youth violence is a huge problem in many countries, ours included. We are researching the risk and resiliency factors, and building programmes to deal with them. We are developing programmes to make schools safer and to make

them places where children feel safe and part of a community. We are encouraging programmes which improve sports and recreation, and which deal with the factors which encourage children to join gangs.

We are carrying out a major research project on rape, and are at the same time developing programmes to implement the very powerful Domestic Violence Act and to conscientize communities about both rape and domestic violence. We are trying to insulate children against exposure to domestic violence. There are numerous programmes of co-operation between government at various levels and NGOs to deal with these issues.

We also need to deal with the key drivers of crime, especially violent crime. These are, in our particular environment, guns, alcohol and drugs. There is no doubt whatsoever that the easy availability of guns, and especially handguns, is a major contributor to the levels of violent crime and to the ferocity of that crime. We have accordingly introduced a new law to strengthen our control over all guns, we are focusing our policing on this issue, and we have begun a major public campaign to reduce the demand for guns, and to recover guns.

We are working with local and provincial authorities to improve our control over the sale of alcohol in bars and taverns, both formal and informal, and to close those which sell to minors, or which are centres of crime and iniquity. We are also building up public education on alcohol. Guns and alcohol are the key drivers of rape and lethal violence in our environment.

We are putting more focused resources into dealing with the reduction of the supply of drugs, and are starting to implement our Drug Master Plan to reduce demand. We have introduced programmes such as the Metamorphosis Programme in the gang-riddled areas in Cape Town.

We greatly appreciate the excellent co-operation between the states in the SA Development Community, which is well on the way to agreeing a protocol on control of the illegal trafficking of firearms. There are huge numbers of firearms flowing around the region, either from wars which have ended or wars which are continuing, such as those in the Great Lakes area. As long as these flows of firearms continue, there will always be a flow to criminals.

In all of these things, the UN and its conventions play a crucial role. We welcome and strongly support the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime and are looking forward to the finalisation of the Convention and the protocols. These are very urgent, in our view.

The other programmes of the UNODCCP also make a vital contribution. These programmes, of technical support to the developing countries in all regions require effective funding. Again, the developed nations must find new money to, support the crime prevention efforts of the developing countries, and should not expect that money to come at the expense of the existing and valuable programmes.

In conclusion, Chairperson, I wish to say that my government is very committed to crime prevention and to doing whatever is needed to make it effective, in co-operation with our region and the other states of the United Nations.