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**Statement by Ms Ann-Marie Begler, Director-General of the National Council for Crime Prevention, Sweden**

**Subject: Effective crime prevention: keeping pace with new developments**

Mr. (Ms) Chairman,

I appreciate being given the opportunity to express Sweden's views on the important role of modernizing criminal policies by taking into account the question of *preventing crime*.

Reactions to crimes already committed are of crucial importance in investigating crimes, apprehending criminals and giving support to victims of crime. However, a crime committed is a failure in anticipating and preventing crime.

In Sweden, as in many other countries in the World, we have become increasingly aware during the last decades that we cannot resort to the means we have within the criminal justice system alone to fight the increasing criminality. True enough, overall criminality seems to have decreased somewhat in most of the Member States of the European Union during the last decade of the twentieth century. This does not seem to be the case globally, though, where crime trends are pointing upwards.

More importantly, the rise in crime since the Second World War has been substantial, even in the Member States of the European Union. Thus, questions of criminality and insecurity that seriously affect the living quality of ordinary citizens is now of great concern to citizens and decision-makers in most of the countries around the world.

The globalization of market and trade, along with the increasing movement of persons across borders and the technical development have provided law-abiding citizens and companies with greater possibilities. However, these developments have also provided potential criminals and criminal organizations with a greater potential for finding new ways to make illegal profit. Transnational organized crime seriously affects the democratic foundation of our societies, but can also have a serious impact at the local level, as is the case with drug crimes.

To counter these phenomena, we have to take action on several different levels. Cross-border or transnational crimes have to be prevented and combated on an international level, but we also have to be aware of the connections between transnational and domestic criminality. Organized crime feeds domestic criminality with means and ends while domestic criminality constitutes the breeding ground for the recruitment of new members to criminal gangs.

We also have to take action both on a general level, to accumulate knowledge on how to best prevent crime - by building strategies. As the criminality is growing more complex we also have to find new techniques to prevent and counter new types of complex crimes. We are moving in a direction of a knowledge-based strategy to prevent crime, as the accumulated knowledge of for example best practices in crime prevention is growing.

Knowledge of the causes of crime and the development of criminality is of course essential. During the last decade, much effort has been put into

trying to use criminal statistics to compare crime *levels*. As we all know, this is an almost impossible task globally as different countries have different judicial systems and laws, reporting systems and ways to count crimes amongst other. However, in comparing the *development of* criminality, the criminal statistics can be *of* use and the use *of* victim surveys can for some types of crimes give a reasonable picture of crime levels in different countries. We have learnt, and much due to the excellent work put in by UN bodies like The Centre for International Crime Prevention, The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, that many countries have experienced similar developments concerning criminality.

This is the basis for getting our monies' worth when gathering to share experiences. As we have experienced similar crime problems in many cases, we also can profit from learning by other's successes and failures in trying to prevent and combat crime, whether it concerns violence against women, urban criminality and drug-related crimes, crimes with racist or xenophobic motives or juvenile delinquency, just to mention some of the topics that seem to be on the agenda in many countries today.

What's more - the criminal justice systems cannot prevent crime alone. Decisions in several different sectors of society have the greatest impact on the development of criminality. Political decision-makers in all sectors of society have to beware not to *create* new opportunities to commit crime when deciding on new rules or legislation. An important tool would be pre-assessment *of* the consequences for criminality that proposals for new rules could have. We also know that the increasing segregation and gaps between rich and poor, as other socio-economic factors, create risks for the development *of* the propensity to commit crime.

Political decisions and actions at local level are *of* great importance in reducing the opportunities to commit crime and in providing the best

possible conditions for children and juveniles to grow in. Giving parents the means to support their families, providing good schools and housing as well as opportunities for paid employment is fundamental. Sweden will in the workshop on community involvement in crime prevention present our view that governments have to give strong support to local action to prevent crime, that builds on an analysis of the the local problems and resources.

Sweden welcomes this opportunity to meet and share experiences and views on how to best prevent crime, whether transnational organised or domestic, in co-operation between different actors at several levels in our society. It is our belief that the crime preventive approach has to be mainstreamed in all actions to combat crime as well as in decisions and actions in other sectors of society.

Thank you Mr. (Ms) Chairman!