

**10th UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS ON THE
PREVENTION OF CRIME AND THE TREATMENT OF
OFFENDERS: 10-17APRIL**

**Draft address to the plenary session on "The State of Crime
and Criminal justice Worldwide"**

The United Kingdom delegation welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Congress.

Transnational crime is rightly a high priority for the Congress. The UK strongly supports measures which make transnational crime more difficult; and which help to bring those responsible for it to justice. We therefore attach great importance to concluding the work on the draft Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocols.

In the high level segment later this week, the Minister of State at the Home Office, Mr Charles Clarke, will address the Congress, on behalf of the UK Government, on the subject of transnational crime.

Today, the UK delegation welcomes the opportunity to address the Congress on other challenges, as we enter the 21st century.

There are three jurisdictions in the UK: Scotland; Northern Ireland; and England and Wales. I shall speak about the challenges as we see them in England and Wales.

Our work on crime and criminal justice is underpinned by three themes:

1. promoting partnerships - working more effectively together across organisational and geographical boundaries
2. building on the evidence - of what works - focusing on outcomes, against clear objectives and targets
3. promoting rights - and responsibilities.

After rising for most of this century, recorded crime in England and Wales has fallen in five of the last six years. In the most recent year crime was 19% below the level recorded six years earlier. Our top priority is to sustain that reduction.

Key points about our approach include:

- a clear, comprehensive strategy
- maximum use of technical support
- partnership between agencies working together
- thorough evaluation
- a key role for police authorities and police forces, who are required to review and compare their performance with others; consult local communities; and set challenging targets to reduce vehicle crime, domestic burglary, and - in areas - robbery.

We have given special attention to the challenges presented by violence against women.

- the Government has made clear that domestic violence is an abhorrent crime which will not be tolerated. The Government has published its initiatives and commitments in a document entitled *Living without Fear: an integrated approach to tackling violence against women* published last year;
- the Government believes that everyone who comes into contact with cases of domestic violence has a part to play in tackling it: the police and other criminal justice agencies, local authority departments, the health service, voluntary agencies, all working together;
- this message has been put over through publicity, to increase awareness;
- this year the Government published guidance to all the agencies working together to reduce domestic violence. This includes examples of current good practice which local organisations can adapt for their own use;

- as part of the Government's crime reduction programme, at least £7m is to be allocated to projects tackling domestic violence, rape and sexual assault.

Another high priority for us has been support for victims of crime, and the treatment of witnesses in the criminal justice system particularly these most vulnerable.

- over 1 million victims a year receive support through local schemes, on which the Government spends nearly £20 million a year
- the police provide information to the victim about developments in the case
- the prosecuting authorities are stepping up their own direct communications with victims
- we are about to introduce victim statements, to enable victims to explain the impact of the crime on them
- we are examining the possibility of introducing a more formal role for a victim's representative in the course of criminal proceedings

- we continue to spend over £200m a year on compensation to victims of crimes against the person.

In the administration of Justice, we believe that justice delayed is justice denied. For persistent young offenders, in particular, justice must be administered quickly as well as fairly to interrupt the pattern of offending.

We set ourselves the target of halving the average time taken to deal with persistent young offenders, and are on course to achieve this. And we are implementing reforms, which will substantially reduce delays in all cases.

Another objection is to increase police effectiveness, both in preventing crime, and in detecting offenders and bringing them to justice.

Exploiting new technology is a key part of this.

For example, we are increasingly using DNA profiling to identify criminals from evidence left at scenes of crime. Some 500 DNA database matches (suspect to crime scene or crime scene to crime scene) are reported each week. So successful has this been, that we are investing £34 million over the next two years to expand the number of profiles of convicted or suspected people held on our national DNA database.

Also in 1997 we began to introduce a new automated fingerprint identification system to police forces.

At the same time, we are concerned that police services should deserve the support of 11 sections of the community. A programme of action is being taken to ensure that police forces operate in ways that are free from racism in all its forms, including institutional racism.

In tackling crime, our analysis now shows a very strong connection between crimes committed for gain, and drug misuse by the perpetrators.

- we have tested people arrested. Nearly 80% of those were tested positive for an illegal drug
- we asked them about their income. Property crime provided around 75% of the total illegal income of people arrested, of which about one third was spent on buying heroin or crack/cocaine.

Everything I have described is about improving performance. We now expect and require different agencies to work together to reduce crime and disorder; prevent young offenders from re-offending; and improve the criminal justice system.

By law, local authority chief executives and chief constables are required to produce and implement plans to tackle local problems; and many other agencies are under a duty to co-operate.

A similar legal framework is in place for youth offending.

We have strengthened rights and responsibilities by incorporating in domestic law the European Convention on Human Rights. We were amongst the first signatories of the Convention; but incorporation will provide new means, through our own courts, of ensuring the adequacy of our laws and procedures.

We value the opportunity of the Congress to share our experience with fellow Member States, and learn from theirs. Just as we work across organisational boundaries within our own shores, so too do we strive to work more effectively together across international boundaries.

I thank fellow participants for their attention.