



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



United Nations  
Congresses on Crime Prevention  
and Criminal Justice 1955–2010

55 years of achievement



# 55 years of United Nations Crime Congresses

For more than half a century, the United Nations has held congresses aimed at strengthening international cooperation against expanding crime.

The quinquennial congresses have impacted criminal justice policies, as well as national procedures and professional practices throughout the world. The congresses are especially critical now, as the globalization of many contemporary problems, including crime, has made international collaboration an urgent priority. The United Nations' efforts to set international guidelines for criminal justice are not without precedent.

In 1872, the International Prison Commission—which later became the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission (IPPC)—was created during an international conference to make recommendations for prison reform. The IPPC became affiliated with the League of Nations and continued to hold crime control conferences every five years. With the dissolution of IPPC after World War II, its functions were transferred to the United Nations in 1950, including the practice of holding international conferences on crime control matters at five-year intervals. Accordingly, the First United Nations Congress was held in Geneva in 1955.

Fifty-five years later, this tradition continues with the Government of Brazil hosting the Twelfth United Nations Congress in Salvador, Brazil. The theme of the Twelfth Congress is “Comprehensive strategies for global challenges: crime prevention and criminal justice systems and their development in a changing world”.

- 1955** **The First Congress** adopted the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.
- 1960** **The Second Congress** recommended special police services for juvenile justice.
- 1965** **The Third Congress** analysed the relationship between criminality and social change.
- 1970** **The Fourth Congress** called for improving crime prevention planning for economic and social development.
- 1975** **The Fifth Congress** approved the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- 1980** Under the theme “Crime prevention and the quality of life”, **the Sixth Congress** recognized that crime prevention must be based on the social, cultural, political and economic circumstances of countries.
- 1985** **The Seventh Congress** adopted the Milan Plan of Action and several new United Nations standards and norms under the theme “Crime prevention for freedom, justice, peace and development”.
- 1990** **The Eighth Congress** recommended action against organized crime and terrorism under the theme “International crime prevention and criminal justice in the twenty-first century”.
- 1995** **The Ninth Congress** focused on international cooperation and practical technical assistance for strengthening the rule of law under the theme “Seeking security and justice for all”.
- 2000** **The Tenth Congress** adopted the Vienna Declaration committing Member States to strengthen international cooperation in the fight against transnational crime and criminal justice reform.
- 2005** **The Eleventh Congress** adopted the Bangkok Declaration, a crucial political document laying the foundation for and showing the direction towards strengthening international coordination and cooperation efforts, in order to prevent and combat crime.

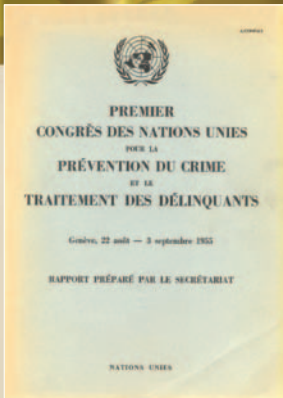


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**FIRST UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS**  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Geneva, Switzerland  
22 August - 3 September 1955



## The First Congress adopted the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

Over 50 governments and 500 participants took part in the first UN Crime Prevention Congress. The main focus of the event was the treatment of juvenile delinquents and prisoners, the numbers of which had risen dramatically in post-war Europe.

### Congress topics:

- “Open” penal and correctional institutions
- The selection and training of prison personnel
- The proper use of prison labour
- The impact of the mass media on juvenile deviancy

### The Congress made recommendations:

For the prevention of juvenile delinquency through the community, the family, schools and social services, as well as the selection and training of prison personnel.

### Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

The First Congress concluded with the adoption of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners which cover the general management of institutions, and are applicable to all categories of prisoners, criminal or civil, in pre-trial detention or following conviction and sentencing, including prisoners subject to “security measures” or corrective measures ordered by a judge.

Since their development and adoption the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners have had immeasurable impact on the treatment of prisoners worldwide. Today they remain the standards against which many concerned human rights, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations determine the treatment of prisoners.



51 governments +++ 43 NGOs +++ 512 participants



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**SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS**  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
London, England  
8 - 19 August 1960



Over one thousand participants converged on London for the 1960 Congress which focused on crime, including juvenile delinquency, that resulted from social changes accompanying rapid economic development. Following the adoption in 1959 of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the Congress concentrated on new forms of juvenile delinquency, their origin, prevention and treatment.

#### **The Congress made recommendations on:**

- Short-term imprisonment
- The integration of prison labour with the national economy
- The remuneration of prisoners
- Pre-release treatment and assistance to dependents of prisoners
- Parole and released prisoners' transition to community life
- After-care, including vocational guidance, training and placement
- The role of national planning in preventing crime

#### **Special police services for the prevention of juvenile delinquency**

The Second Congress made recommendations on special police services for the prevention of juvenile delinquency, with special emphasis to the development of the greatest possible cooperation

The Second Congress recommended special police services for juvenile justice

between the police, various national specialized agencies and the general public regarding measures to prevent juvenile delinquency.

#### **Establishment of Regional Networks**

To involve developing regions more closely with the United Nations Crime Programme the Second Congress set in motion the creation of regional crime institutes.



68 governments +++ 50 NGOs +++ 1,046 participants



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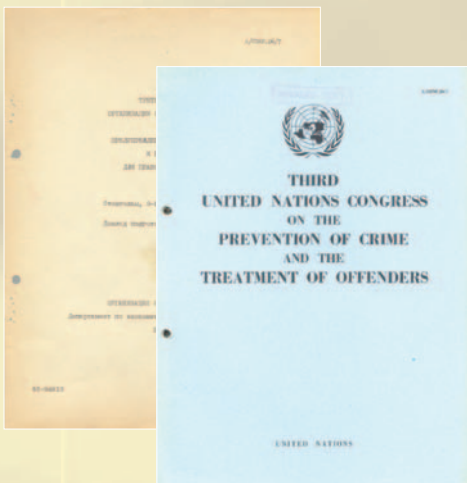
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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Stockholm, Sweden  
9 - 18 August 1965



## The Third Congress analyzed the relationship between criminality and social change



### **The Congress topics focused on:**

- Social change and criminality
- Social forces and the prevention of criminality
- Community action for preventing crime
- Special preventive and treatment measures for juveniles and young adults
- Measures to reduce recidivism

### **The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute**

The Congress recognized the importance of research and training in the field of crime, including the launching of regional and inter-regional initiatives. As a follow-up to the actions of the Third Congress, the United Nations Social Defence Research Institute was established in 1968 in Rome. In 1989, the Economic and Social Council formally recognised the expansion of UNSDRI into the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).

“Prevention of Criminality” was the main theme of the Stockholm Congress, which started to devote attention to technical assistance in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, stressing the need of criminological research for crime prevention.

74 governments +++ 39 NGOs +++ 1,083 participants



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FOURTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Kyoto, Japan  
17 - 26 August 1970



## The Fourth Congress called for improved crime prevention planning for economic and social development

Under the theme “Crime and Development” the Kyoto Congress was the first to be preceded by regional preparatory meetings, which were held in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Previously, there had been little opportunity for experts of all regions to formulate a common policy approach to the items on the agenda.

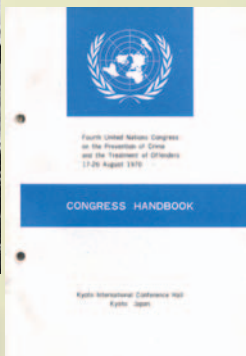
### Congress topics:

- Social defence policies in relation to development planning
- Public participation in crime prevention and control of crime and delinquency
- The organization of research for policy development in social defence
- Developments in the correctional field

### Improved crime prevention planning for economic and social development

The Kyoto Congress was the first to adopt a declaration, calling on governments to take effective steps to coordinate and intensify their crime prevention efforts in the context of economic and social development.

It further recognized that crime in all its forms sapped the energies of nations, undermining efforts to achieve a more wholesome environment and a better life for their people. In addition, the Congress discussed for the first time the problem of terrorism and airplane hijacking.



79 governments +++ 31 NGOs +++ 998 participants



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FIFTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Geneva, Switzerland  
1 - 12 September 1975



## The Fifth Congress approved the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Congress returned to Geneva in 1975. For the first time, discussions focused on the new forms and dimensions of criminality, including organized crime as a business, and the costs of crime.

### The Congress made recommendations on:

- Offences involving works of art and other cultural property
- Criminality associated with alcoholism and drug abuse

- Interpersonal violence
- Criminality associated with migration and flight from natural disasters and hostilities
- Female criminality
- Terrorism

### The Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Fifth Congress adopted a resolution in which it recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, subsequently developed into a convention by the Commission on Human Rights. The Congress also recommended the formulation of an international code of conduct for law enforcement officials.



101 governments +++ 33 NGOs +++ 909 participants



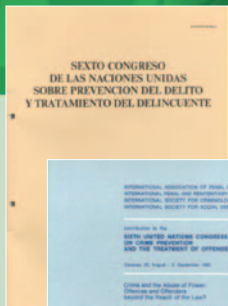


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SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Caracas, Venezuela  
25 August - 5 September 1980



Under the theme  
“Crime prevention and the quality of life”,  
the Sixth Congress recognized that  
crime prevention must be based on the  
social, cultural, political and economic  
circumstances of countries

The Sixth Congress called for broad support and participation in crime prevention and the development of alternatives to imprisonment, as well as measures to address crime and abuse of power.

#### The Congress adopted resolutions on:

- Crime trends and crime prevention strategies
- Improvement of crime statistics
- Development of minimum standards of juvenile justice
- Measures to put an end to torture and extra-legal executions
- De-institutionalization of corrections and community measures
- Specific needs of women prisoners

#### The “Caracas Declaration”

Through the “Caracas Declaration”, Member States underlined the vital role played by the United Nations in encouraging international cooperation and the development of norms and guidelines in the field of criminal policy. Member States were also called to ensure that those responsible for the functioning of the criminal justice system should be properly qualified for their tasks and should perform them in a manner, which is independent of personal or group interest. The Congress also recommended the establishment of a regional institute in Africa.

102 governments +++ 38 NGOs +++ 920 participants



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**SEVENTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS**  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Milan, Italy  
26 August - 6 September 1985



The Milan Congress was preceded by regional and interregional preparatory meetings which proved valuable for their access to new information and ongoing research. The meetings were also strategically important for evaluating progress in the implementation of recommendations from previous congresses.

#### **The Congress approved:**

- The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice
- The Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power
- The Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary
- The Model Agreement on the Transfer of Foreign Prisoners.

The Seventh Congress adopted the Milan Plan of Action and several new United Nations standards and norms under the theme “Crime prevention for freedom, justice, peace and development”

#### **The Milan Plan of Action:**

The Milan Plan of Action called the attention of the international community to the problem of crime as an issue of global concern, hampering the political, economic, social and cultural development of people. It reiterated that crime threatened human rights, fundamental freedoms, and peace, stability and security. It also recommended that the United Nations, as a universal forum, has an important role to play in multilateral cooperation, particularly in taking concerted action against terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime.



125 governments +++ 58 NGOs +++ 1,395 participants



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**EIGHTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS**  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Havana, Cuba  
27 August - 7 September 1990



The Havana Congress took place at a time when it was recognized that crime with its international dimensions was increasing at an alarming rate.

#### **The Congress approved standards on:**

- The Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners
- The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency
- The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty
- The Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials
- The United Nations Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors
- The Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers
- Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures

#### **The Congress also approved:**

- The Model Treaty on Extradition
- The Model Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance
- The Model Treaty on Transfer of Proceedings in Criminal Matters
- The Model Treaty on Transfer of Supervision of Offenders Conditionally Sentenced or Conditionally Released

The Eighth Congress recommended action against organized crime and terrorism under the theme “International crime prevention and criminal justice in the twenty-first century”

#### **Prevention and control of organized crime and measures against terrorism**

The Congress recommended research into the structure of organized crime and evaluation of the existing counter-measures, as well as strengthened international cooperation against terrorism. The Congress also recommended that a summit be held in Paris in 1991, leading to the establishment of an intergovernmental commission on crime prevention and criminal justice as the principal policy-making body of the United Nations.



**127 governments +++ 46 NGOs +++ 1,127 participants**



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**NINTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS**  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Cairo, Egypt  
28 April - 5 May 1995



The Egyptian capital was the venue for the 1995 Congress, the first to incorporate technical workshops as an integral part of its proceedings. The workshops discussed strategies to prevent violent crime, computerization of criminal justice, the role of mass media in crime prevention and extradition.

#### **Congress topics:**

- Action against transnational and organized crime
- The role of criminal law in the protection of the environment
- Criminal justice and police systems
- Crime prevention strategies in urban areas
- Youth crime

#### **International cooperation and practical technical assistance for strengthening the rule of law**

The Congress placed a high priority on the technical cooperation and advisory services offered by the United Nations to assist Member States in

The Ninth Congress focused on international cooperation and practical technical assistance for strengthening the rule of law under the theme “Seeking security and justice for all”

achieving the goals of preventing crime within and among States and improving the response to crime. The recommendations for assistance included training programmes, field studies and action-oriented research at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels.

#### **Programme Network of Institutes (PNI)**

In 1995 the PNI welcomed the U.S. Justice Department's National Institute of Justice and the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, Vancouver, Canada. The PNI members conduct research, disseminate information and provide training and technical assistance.



138 governments +++ 73 NGOs +++ 1,899 participants



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**TENTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS**  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of Offenders  
Vienna, Austria  
10 - 17 April 2000



Almost two thousand participants met in the Austrian capital of Vienna in 2000 for the first Crime Congress of the new Millennium. "Crime and justice, meeting the challenges of the 21st century" was the theme of this Congress.

## The Tenth Congress adopted the Vienna Declaration committing Member States to take international action against corruption

### Congress topics and workshops:

- How to promote the rule of law and strengthen the criminal justice system
- International cooperation in combating transnational organized crime
- Effective crime prevention: keeping pace with new developments
- Combating corruption
- Crimes related to the computer network
- Community involvement in crime prevention
- Women in the criminal justice system



and speedy measures to combat terrorism, trafficking in human beings, illicit trade in firearms, smuggling of migrants and money-laundering. The Declaration further committed States to take enhanced international action against corruption, stressing the need for a new international legal instrument in addition to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

### The Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice

The Tenth Congress adopted by acclamation the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice in which Member States pledged to take resolute

### Programme Network of Institutes (PNI)

UNICRI, together with the regional and associated institutes (PNI), helped to organize the workshops thus continuing to assist the international community in strengthening co-operation in the area of crime prevention and criminal justice.

**137 governments +++ 58 NGOs +++ 1,902 participants**



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**ELEVENTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS**  
**Synergies and responses: strategic**  
**alliances in crime prevention and**  
**criminal justice**  
**Bangkok, Thailand**  
**18 - 25 April 2005**



The Eleventh Congress adopted the Bangkok Declaration, a crucial political document laying the foundation for and showing the direction towards strengthening international coordination and cooperation efforts, in order to prevent and combat crime.

### Congress Topics:

Thematic issues included:

- Effective measures to combat transnational organized crime
- Economic and financial crime: challenges to sustainable development
- Corruption: threats and trends in the twenty-first century
- International cooperation against terrorism and links between terrorism and other criminal activities
- Making standards work: 50 years of standard-setting in crime prevention and criminal justice

### Workshops on:

- International Criminal Justice Education for the Rule of Law
- Survey of United Nations and Other Best Practices in the Treatment of Prisoners in the Criminal Justice System
- Practical Approaches to Preventing Urban Crime
- Links between Drug Trafficking and Other Forms of Organized Crime: International Coordinated Response
- Workshop on Strategies and Best Practices against Overcrowding in Correctional Facilities

**129 governments +++ 35 NGOs +++ 3000+ participants**



