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## **UN Crime Congress in Thailand Calls for Rapid Response To Crime Threat**

18-25 April 2005

VIENNA, 15 April (UN Information Service) -- The Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice will take place in Bangkok, Thailand, from 18 to 25 April 2005. Attendance is expected to be high: participants will include several Heads of State and Ministers from more than 100 countries. More than 2000 delegates from Member States and representatives of various international and non-governmental organizations will also attend the Congress, as will criminal justice professionals from around the world.

The Congress will focus on transnational organized crime, economic and financial crime, corruption, and terrorism. Participants will also consider the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which lays out a broad framework for collective security. The Panel has also addressed the possibility of setting new criteria for the use of force, and encouraged States to embrace a common definition of terrorism. According to the Secretary General, "However noble the cause, there can be no justification for the attacks on innocent civilians."

Antonio Maria Costa, Secretary-General of the Congress and Executive Director of the United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC), will offer participants his perspective on the links between transnational organized crime and terrorism, and comment on ways in which High-level Panel suggestions may improve the ability of States to fight what he has called "a sinister coalition" — crime, drugs and terrorism.

Costa will also elaborate on the Secretary-General's statement that "ours is an age of unparalleled interconnection among threats to international peace and security, and mutual vulnerability between weak and strong", and explain how crime and corruption in poor nations work concurrently to undermine security in richer, industrialized nations.

According to Costa, "Today, transnational organized crime and the corruption it breeds pose a threat of staggering proportions. Conflict, crime, random violence, rape, sexual abuse, homelessness, hunger, and even death are routine parts of life in poor nations, especially in post-conflict areas. For developed nations, too, the cost is high—the steady deterioration of civil society in the most vulnerable parts of the world offers criminals, terrorists, and other predators opportunities to expand what is fast becoming a 'criminal super-state.' No society, no nation and no institution is invulnerable to organized crime or immune to corruption. And as we have witnessed, with horror and disbelief, no nation or organization is safe from terrorism."

UNODC is urging 'capable and responsible' Member States to respond to the spirit and intentions of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Convention against Corruption, by investing substantially in the construction of strong criminal justice systems and drug control institutions in nations beleaguered by criminal gangs, corrupt leadership, and terrorist infiltration. In one country, where drugs were eroding civil society, officials lacked the legal expertise to prepare an extradition order they needed to send a drug trafficker to a nation better equipped to prosecute the alleged offender. In another case, a poor nation in Africa lacked even the resources to publish the country's laws and disseminate them to its citizens. In both situations, UNODC stepped in with support and technical assistance.

Examples like these should provide the press with opportunities for interesting coverage. UNODC Executive Director Costa will also address the following topics and questions:

- What changes can we expect as a result of the High-level Panel Report on Threats, Challenges and Change?
- What constitutes Public Enemy Number One to global security today?
- Does drug money fuel terrorism? What about “guns for drugs”?
- Is eradication of drug crops an effective weapon in the fight against terrorism – and is there an ‘ideal’ time to start the process?
- Are failed administrations breeding grounds for organized crime and terrorism?
- Is human trafficking the “new slavery”?
- How do we substitute the rule of the gun with the Rule of Law?

Costa will also be available for scheduled, one-on-one interviews about the Crime Congress, the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and his views on drug cultivation in Afghanistan, Colombia and other parts of the world.

During the High-level segment of the Crime Congress from 23 to 25 April, there will also be a special treaty event to allow Heads of Government and Representatives to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three Protocols on Trafficking in Human Beings, Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Firearms, as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the four United Nations instruments against terrorism. Participants will be encouraged to comply with the High-level Panel recommendation that “All States should ratify and implement those Conventions, while helping each other to strengthen their criminal justice and rule of law system. And Member States should give adequate resources to UNODC for its key role in overseeing implementation of the Conventions”.

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