

Remarks of the UNODC Executive Director  
Crime Congress Ancillary meeting:  
World Congress for Community Volunteers Supporting  
Offender Reintegration  
Sunday, 7 March 2021, 14:30

Minister Kamikawa,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to open this global gathering of community volunteers supporting offender reintegration.

This event is a resounding endorsement of community responses as an integral part of effective global efforts against crime, and an opportunity to support the essential role of individuals who are making a difference and helping societies advance the rule of law.

I wish to thank Minister Kamikawa, the Ministry of Justice of Japan, and the UN Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and

the Treatment of Offenders for taking the initiative of organizing this World Congress.

Japan's long-standing and exemplary experience with its Volunteer Probation Officer system was a founding inspiration for this World Congress, and remains a model for engaging societies and individuals in crime prevention and criminal justice.

I would also like to warmly greet the community volunteers who are gathered here today, as well as all of those who are participating online in this event, from many countries around the world.

In spite of challenges posed by the pandemic, you have all found a way to join us today whether in person or virtually, just as you find ways to overcome obstacles and make a real and positive impact in your communities.

In the era of COVID-19, we look now more than ever to those willing to contribute their time

and efforts to the betterment of their communities, bringing solidarity, inspiration and hope.

The theme of this year's Crime Congress is: *“Advancing crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda”*.

The guiding light of our joint efforts towards sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda is, at its core, about leaving no one behind.

In line with this global commitment, your efforts to provide community-based supervision and counselling for offenders are essential to supporting the social reintegration of those who are too often rejected or marginalized.

I commend you for your belief in individuals being capable of positive change, and in members of the community as agents of that change.

By working together, community volunteers and offenders seeking reintegration make a tangible contribution to upholding public safety and the rule of law and building resilience to the harms caused by crime and recidivism. They lift us closer towards peaceful and inclusive societies.

Successful collaboration between criminal justice practitioners, civil society, and community volunteers proves that multi-stakeholder partnerships are a powerful tool to ensure that the roots of resilience and solidarity take hold. Their work together truly encapsulates the spirit of Goals 16 and 17 of the 2030 Agenda, and provides a model for others to follow.

At UNODC, we are firmly committed to placing people at the centre of our responses.

Our new UNODC strategy launched this year seeks to anchor our responses around people, including by forging and fortifying partnerships at all levels. It also aims to empower women and

youth, and to harness a culture of learning and innovation.

In its implementation, we will strive to support agents of change in communities, such as the community volunteers whom we celebrate today.

UNODC also shares your belief in social reintegration of offenders.

Our Global Programme on Prison Challenges strives to assist countries in improving their use of non-custodial measures such as bail, probation, and parole, which can often help facilitate the social reintegration of offenders, and to institutionalize a rehabilitative approach to prison management.

In 2020, our efforts continued despite the challenges posed by COVID-19. In Sri Lanka, for example, UNODC trained criminal justice professionals on the use of non-custodial measures, while in Thailand and Vietnam we helped assess the use of non-custodial measures for women offenders.

UNODC has also been supporting countries in improving the employability and social reintegration of prisoners upon release.

We have worked to provide vocational and practical training to prisoners in a number of countries including Bolivia, Namibia, and the State of Palestine, with the aim of equipping them with the skills to provide for themselves and their families. In Indonesia, a new project will train female prisoners to provide them with commercially viable skills.

In addition, UNODC works to reduce reoffending by assisting Member States to improve their compliance with the Nelson Mandela Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Some 35,000 users from more than 150 countries have enrolled in our e-learning course for prison officers on the Mandela Rules, free of charge, and the course has been institutionalized as part of the regular national training curriculum for prison officers in various countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I understand that today's World Congress will adopt a Kyoto Declaration for Community Volunteers. I am looking forward to that Declaration, and I am hopeful it will inform the outcome of the Kyoto Crime Congress and its legacy.

I encourage all of you to take advantage of today's gathering to discuss the powerful contributions that individuals can make to their communities in preventing crime.

I hope that this meeting will pave the way for a global network of community volunteers in the area of offender reintegration, a network of mutual inspiration and solidarity.

UNODC believes in the difference that members of society can make against crime and recidivism. We are ready to support and raise

awareness of the work of community volunteers in the reintegration of offenders.

We stand together with you in extending a hand to offenders in our communities, so that they may find their way back.

Thank you.