

Welcome Address to His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn
by Antonio Maria Costa
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Ceremonial Opening of Crime Congress
18 April 2005

Your Royal Highness, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn;

Your Royal Highness, Princess Bajrakitiyabha;

His Excellency Mr. Suwat Liptapanlop, Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Thailand;

Honourable Members of the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand;

Distinguished Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen .. .

On behalf of the Secretary General of the United Nations, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, it is indeed a privilege, and honour, to extend our gratitude to their Royal Highnesses for the generous hospitality which has been extended to the United Nations on this historic occasion.

As you know, crime, corruption, and terrorism are not unique to our age. But globalization is, and one of its consequences, certainly unintended, is that these threats can no longer be contained.

"Crime," a New Yorker once said, "is the overhead one pays for living in this city." Of course, today, we could say the same thing about the whole world. This Eleventh Congress is the right meeting, at the right time, in the right place, and for the right reason.

The Right Meeting

Today, transnational organized crime, corruption and terrorism pose a great threat. Billions of dollars disappear annually into an underground economy. In some places where crime and corruption have gained a foothold, even national sovereignty at risk. In others, it is democracy.

Around the world, hundreds of thousands of people live in unstable societies, plagued by economic and physical insecurities. The steady deterioration of civil society in the most vulnerable parts of the world offers criminals and terrorists the operational bases and resources they need to expand into other regions and States. No society, no nation, and no institution is invulnerable to crime or immune to corruption. And as we have witnessed, with disbelief, no nation is safe from terrorism.

The Right Time

The Secretary General's call for reform, and the High Level Panel Report on Threats, Challenges and Change tell us the time for action is now. In September, we will celebrate the Sixtieth Anniversary of the United Nations and review progress made toward realizing the UN Millennium Development Goals. So this Congress is not an isolated event, but part of a larger strategy we believe will spark the imagination and involvement of Member States.

The Right Place

Bangkok is the right place for this meeting: its commitment to combating drugs and drug trafficking is unwavering. But even this great city is not immune to the onslaught of transnational organized crime. Wedged between South and East Asia, with a well-developed transport and communications infrastructure, the Kingdom can be easily attacked. Narcotics trafficking, small-arms trade, extortion, child pornography, and human trafficking — all this is the work of criminal gangs determined to abuse the hospitality and culture of this rich and ancient land. Thailand's reputation for law and order continues to be well deserved, but the fact that this country is vulnerable to the same dangers we see in other countries, tells us again there must be common solutions to these collective threats.

The Right Reason

The reason for this Crime Congress is a compelling one: during the last five years, Member States have worked side-by-side to craft two Conventions we believe are major weapons in the fight against Organized Crime and Corruption. During this Congress, high-level representatives will have an opportunity to ratify the UN Conventions and Protocols we need to drive real-world change. They also have an opportunity to create genuine solidarity between nations, and to watch developed nations deliver on commitments to invest, assist, and engage in the future of the developing world.

I look forward to working with you all during the next few days.

Your Royal Highness, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn;
Your Royal Highness, Princess Bajrakitiyabha;
Honourable Members of the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand;
Distinguished Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen.. .

In closing, I wish to convey special thanks on behalf of the Secretary-General to the Royal Family, the Honourable Minister of Justice and the Government and People of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting this Congress. We know what a challenge it has been, given the tsunami that hit a few months ago, a tragedy which took the lives of so many Thai friends.

And now I have the pleasure of inviting His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, to deliver his welcoming address to the Congress.