

Remarks by Stephen Stedman, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General, to the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, 24 April 2005.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Your Excellencies,

The Secretary-General noted in his message to the opening session of this Congress that "organized crime is a leading threat to international peace and security in the 21st century," and that this event "should serve as a reminder of how much more we need to do to tackle that threat." On behalf of the Secretary-General, I thank the conveners of the Congress and express sincere satisfaction at seeing such high-level engagement to address the complex and profoundly consequential challenges of organized crime and corruption.

This September, heads of state and government will convene in New York to mark the opening of the 60th General Assembly and the 60th anniversary of the UN. We all hope this will be a truly historic occasion. The Secretary-General, over the past year, has been working tirelessly to encourage leaders to come together at that summit and agree upon a new and comprehensive concept of collective security for the 21st century — one that tackles new threats and old and that addresses the security concerns of all States.

This new consensus is essential if we are to realize the aspiration of the UN Charter: that all peoples might live "in larger freedom." Larger freedom means freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity. Indeed, as the Secretary-General put it in his report released last month, "we will not enjoy development without security,

we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights."

Your efforts, in your own countries and in collaboration with others, to combat organized crime, corruption and terrorism are indispensable in a new collective security system, and in securing "larger freedom" for all peoples.

In the twenty-first century, threats to peace and security include not just international war and conflict but *all* events and processes that cause large-scale death or lessen life chances on a large scale, and undermine States as the basic unit of the international system. Transnational organized crime is chief among these; it demands a sustained and focused response from all states and the United Nations.

In our globalized world, all the threats we face are interconnected; the poor are vulnerable to threats to the rich, as much as the strong are vulnerable to the threats that menace the weak. Development, security and the rule of law — and our aspirations toward "larger freedom" — are all threatened by the scourge of transnational organized crime.

Not only is organized crime interconnected with the threats of poverty, war, terrorism and nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. It is a unique and vital enabler for realizing the most destructive potential of these other threats. Organized crime facilitates illicit trafficking in the small arms and light weapons that fuel the world's

bloodiest and most protracted conflicts and facilitate the most heinous crimes against humanity. We have seen revelations emerge in recent years that through organized crime an extensive network of non-state actors have facilitated the proliferation of nuclear weapons technologies. Undermining the rule of law, organized crime and corruption contribute to state weakness, impede economic growth, and undermine peacebuilding efforts, quite often strengthening the desperate grip of poverty. And as we know all too well, organized crime also provides financing mechanisms to terrorist groups, and in undermining state capacity, helps to create havens in which terrorist groups may operate with little interference, or with impunity.

In recent years, the United Nations has made important progress in building a framework of international standards and norms for the fight against organized crime and corruption. The dedication and commitment of member states have yielded the adoption or entry into force of several major conventions and protocols. Yet if we truly accord responses to organized crime and corruption the attention they require in a new system of collective security, we must align our action to our rhetoric and do far more to address outstanding challenges. We all must work to increase cooperation among states, improve coordination among our international agencies, and work toward a much stronger record of compliance and implementation for the commitments we have undertaken.

To increase cooperation among states, the first task ahead is to urge all states to ratify and implement agreements to counter organized crime and terrorism. More

than half of the member states of the UN have not yet signed or ratified the 2000 UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three Protocols, and the 2003 UN Convention against Corruption. Given the intimate link between organized crime and terrorism, it is also imperative that all states sign and ratify our 12 international conventions against terrorism—to which we may now of course add the recently approved Convention on Nuclear Terrorism. I would reiterate the appeal of the Secretary-General to States to take advantage of the Special Treaty Event during the High-level segment of this Congress, and the Treaty Event that will be held during the 60th session of the General Assembly to deposit instruments of ratification or accession.

Second, we must work toward a much stronger record of compliance and implementation for the commitments we have undertaken. We have developed an impressive legal framework of international standards and norms to combat transnational organized crime, yet we must do more to effectively implement these instruments. Your high-level participation in this Congress is testament to the focused and sustained attention we must devote to this task. Many states parties to our most important conventions have not implemented them adequately, most often because they genuinely lack the capacity to do so. If we are to continue urging states to sign and ratify these instruments, and if we are to maintain states parties' confidence in their integrity, member states must give adequate resources to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its key role in overseeing implementation of conventions and treaties on organized crime and terrorism. I welcome, in this regard, statements this past week from numerous states in the General Assembly supporting this.

Third, enhancing coordination among our international agencies must also be a top priority. Such coordination will mightily assist our efforts at cooperation and implementation. The Secretary-General has pointed out that better coordination is most urgently needed in post-conflict environments. Effective national legal and judicial institutions are essential to the success of efforts to help societies emerge from a violent past. Yet the UN, other international organizations and member Governments remain poorly equipped to provide support for such institutions in their early development and consolidation. Assistance is often piecemeal, slow and ill-suited to the ultimate goal. To help the UN realize its potential in this area, the Secretary-General has announced his intention to create a dedicated Rule of Law Assistance Unit in a new Peacebuilding Support Office to assist national efforts to re-establish the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict environments. I fully expect that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to play a role in that Unit.

Finally, I would like to add a word about the need for a comprehensive, global strategy against terrorism — one that is effective and respectful of universal human rights and the rule of law. As part of his reform package this year, the Secretary General has put forward such a strategy based on what he calls the five Ds:

Dissuasion

Deterrence

Denial

Development

Defense of Human Rights

I urge all member states to support this strategy and I would like to highlight three recommendations:

1. The need to agree on a universal definition of terrorism that can be part of a declaration at the High level Summit in September, one that makes clear that no cause, however, legitimate, can justify
2. the conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism
3. the establishment of a Special rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism.

In Conclusion, As you proceed with your deliberations throughout this important Congress, I encourage you consider these proposals carefully, and in doing so, to be mindful of the broader and historic challenge that the Secretary-General has put to all member states. In his opening address to the General Assembly last year, he noted the part we all must "play in the age-old struggle to strengthen the rule of law for all — which alone can guarantee freedom for all." I congratulate you all on your dedication to this noble task, and I wish you all success in your proceedings.