

Alliance of NGOs on crime prevention and criminal justice

Ian Tennant, Chair

The Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, as the umbrella organization of civil society working with the UNODC and member states on crime and justice issues, is pleased to take the floor and make statement on preparations for the next Crime Congress.

In 1991, UN General Assembly Resolution 46/152 confirmed the role of the long-standing Crime Congress as a consultative body of the UN crime programme, to provide 'a forum for the exchange of views between States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and individual experts representing various professions and disciplines'.

And throughout its history, civil society has been central not only to the Congress's mandate, but also its practice. With academia, professional associations, non-governmental organizations, and individual experts all playing a role in proceedings, alongside government representatives.

But unfortunately this role has gradually been downgraded, in parallel to other manifestations of the shrinking space for civil society at the multilateral level.

The wording of the political declarations of the Congress shows a weakening, over time, of support for the role of civil society in crime-prevention and criminal-justice policy and responses – in opposition to the mandate and practice of the Congress – and in contrast to the crucial role that civil society plays in crime prevention and criminal justice around the world. The Vienna declaration of 2000 refers to civil society clearly as partners, and by the Kyoto declaration in 2021, the references to civil society had been significantly downgraded.

There is therefore a need for the Abu Dhabi Congress to reinforce the roots, history and mandate of the Congress as a multistakeholder platform. The challenge that the Congress has set itself – of protecting people and planet – needs the input of all stakeholders to have a meaningful outcome.

As the umbrella body for the engagement of civil society with the UNODC and member states on the Congress (guided by its statutes and MOU with the UNODC), we look forward to working with the host country, and the UNODC, in ensuring wide participation in the preparatory process, at the Congress, and, beyond.

We have already published a survey for civil society to shape our contributions to the regional preparatory meetings, and more than 350 people have signed up to a briefing we will host with the Secretariat for civil society later in December.

Thank you

