

**Ambassador Ugljesa Ugi Zvekic, EPLO**

**Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Kyoto, 7-12 March 2021\***

## **Summary Report**

The Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was organized in Kyoto, Japan, from 7 to 12 March 2021. It continued the long tradition of the world's largest get-togethers on crime and justice, but in some respects, it was a very different Congress. Above all, it had the distinction of being the first major UN conference in any field to be organized after the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Kyoto Congress set the pattern for how this can be done in such unprecedented circumstance in a **hybrid conference**, with some participants on-site actually roaming the conference halls, and others participating remotely from their office or home all around the world.

### **The Kyoto Declaration**

The Congress had a variety of substantive outcomes: the extensive Congress report, the advance documentation, the reports of the five regional preparatory meetings, the documentation on the ancillary meetings made available through the Knowledge Centre, and the other documents.

However, the **Kyoto Declaration** is the politically most important outcome of the Congress. The Kyoto Declaration is a political statement negotiated by the member states in advance of the Congress, and adopted by the member states on opening day of the Congress. Yet, it has a rather notable limitation as no representatives of UN special agencies, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations or individual experts are involved in the negotiation or adoption.

The Kyoto Declaration itself is not binding. It does not establish rights or obligations to anyone, nor does it as such guide even the work of the UNODC. Formally speaking, the Kyoto Declaration is submitted to the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which will meet in Vienna in May 2021.

It reflects structure of the Congress itself. Connections can readily be drawn between the various substantive agenda items and Workshops on one hand, and different sections of the Kyoto Declaration on the other. This, and the use of subheadings, makes it easier to navigate the relatively long document (97 operative paragraphs; some 6,000 words in English). Since the Kyoto Congress was the first to be held after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, it is also clearly evident that connections can be drawn not only to Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, security, the rule of law, and access to justice, but also to other SDGs.

The Kyoto Declaration is balanced in the sense that it deals with crime prevention and criminal justice, local, national and international issues, the need to support vulnerable communities, the position of the victim, gender-sensitive crime prevention and criminal justice, children and young persons, access to justice, the rule of law, domestic crime and transnational organized crime, anti-corruption, terrorism, emerging forms of crime, as well as the operation of the domestic criminal justice system (including restorative justice) and international cooperation. The Kyoto Declaration is also very timely, above all by including several paragraphs on the impact and response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since this was the first UN Crime Congress to be held after the adoption (in 2015) of the 2030 Agenda with its Sustainable Development Goals, it is understandable that the theme of the Congress was formulated as “Advancing crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda”.

### **Opening of the Congress**

The formal opening of the Congress saw Ms. Yoko Kamikawa, Minister of Justice of Japan, Ms. Ghada Wady, Executive Director of UNODC and Secretary-General of the Congress, Her Imperial Highness, Princess Takamado, Prime Minister of Japan Mr. Yoshihide Suga, and by video statements: Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Munir Akram, President of ECOSOC and Mr. Hayashi Makoto, the Prosecutor General of Japan. The **Kyoto Declaration** was adopted by acclamation. The Kyoto Declaration shall be submitted to the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice for its consideration at its session on 17-21 May 2021.

### **The high-level segment**

During the **high-level segment**, statements were made by representatives of the Group of 77 and China, the African regional group, and the European Union, by 115 high-level representatives of member states and by representatives of 26 other entities.

### **The substantive work of the Kyoto Congress**

Following the model of the successful structure of the Thirteenth UN Crime Congress, the Kyoto Congress had four substantive agenda items, each of which was interlinked with a workshop, prepared by UN Programme Network Institutes.

The first substantive agenda item was “Comprehensive strategies for crime prevention towards social and economic development”, which was connected with Workshop 1, on “Evidence-based crime prevention: statistics, indicators and evaluation in support of successful practices.” The second was “Integrated approaches to challenges facing the criminal justice system”, which was connected with Workshop 2, on “Reducing reoffending: identifying risks and developing solutions.”

The third had the unusually lengthy topic of “Multidimensional approaches by Governments to promoting the rule of law by, inter alia, providing access to justice for all; building effective, accountable, impartial and inclusive institutions; and considering social, educational and other relevant measures, including fostering a culture of lawfulness while respecting cultural identities, in line with the Doha Declaration.” This was connected with Workshop 3, “Education and youth engagement as key to making societies resilient to crime. “

The fourth substantive agenda item was “International cooperation and technical assistance to prevent and address all forms of crime: (a) Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; (b) New and emerging forms of crime,” which was connected with Workshop 4, “Current crime trends, recent developments, and emerging solutions, in particular new technologies as means for and tools against crime.” Another successful innovation first used at the Thirteenth UN Crime Congress (Doha, 2015) was that the Congress declaration was adopted at the formal opening of the Congress, just before the high-level segment.

Following past practice, the Kyoto Congress also had many ancillary meetings, special events, as well as an exhibition. Ambassador Ugljesa Ugi Zvekic, EPLO participated in the Panel on “20 Years of UN-CAC: Past, Present and Future” organized by UNODC, the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Centre under the sponsorship of the Alliance of NGOs for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

However, the pandemic had a marked impact on these forms of activities. All of the ancillary meetings became “on-line” only. Other than the technicians, and one or two panellists who were otherwise attending the Kyoto Congress in person, there was no-one participating in these meetings on site. Because of the technical demands of on-line ancillary meetings, the number of ancillary meetings was considerably reduced in comparison to the Thirteen UN Crime Congress, from 195 to about 130. The same Covid-19 related restrictions affected the exhibition. This time, despite early plans to showcase innovations and achievements from around the world, the exhibitors were solely entities from the host country. In addition to the ancillary meetings, thirteen “special events” were organized at the Kyoto Congress. These, which were organized by the host government, tended to feature high level speakers, and were given coverage by the UN media services.

The Kyoto Congress was preceded by a Youth Forum, which presented its conclusions and recommendations to the Congress itself on its opening day. The substantive work of the formal part of the Fourteenth UN Crime Congress is reflected in the reports that were adopted at the close of the Congress, and are available on-line at the UNODC website.

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- Based on the Informal Report provided by Dr Matti Joutsen, Delegation of Finland and Chairperson of the Committee 2 at the Congress.