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Thematic discussion on protecting children in a digital age: the misuse of technology in the abuse and exploitation of children

World crime trends and emerging issues and responses in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present document was prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/18 and decision 2010/243. The document provides information on preliminary results from the Twelfth United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, statistics and analysis on trends in intentional homicide and on crime and victimization in Africa and findings from a series of surveys on the nature and extent of corruption.

* E/CN.15/2011/1.



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I. Introduction

1. The concern that “crime in general is strongly on the increase” is not new. Over 60 years ago, the Social Commission, citing exactly this fear, requested one of the first investigations of criminal statistics, with a view to reporting on the state of crime.¹ The resultant “Statistical report on the state of crime 1937-1946” (E/CN.5/204), prepared by the Secretariat in 1950, focused not only on well-known crimes such as homicide, assault, rape and burglary, but also on offences that now receive little attention at the international level, including desertion or non-support of the family, drunkenness, gambling and espionage. In today’s world, attention is fixed not only on the “conventional” criminal acts of individuals but even more so on criminal activities that are complex, transnational and, in many cases, well organized and profit-driven. The present document, prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/18 and decision 2010/243, provides information available to the Secretary-General on world crime trends today and the state of crime and criminal justice.

2. Today’s crime is becoming, perhaps paradoxically, both increasingly visible and increasingly invisible. The past year, for example, has seen headline reports of large-scale police actions against drug gangs, drug traffickers or drug lords described as controlling whole neighbourhoods in order to protect drug trafficking operations. Such highly visible violent crimes involving armed criminal organizations may often be enabled by less visible, but no less important, crimes. In particular, corruption in the form of bribes accepted by local officials and police to “look the other way” frequently constitute part of the modus operandi of drug cartels and organized criminal groups. In addition, the illicit activities of organized criminal groups, whether financial fraud or drug trafficking or the smuggling of persons, by their very nature, bring profit only when hidden from the State and the general public.

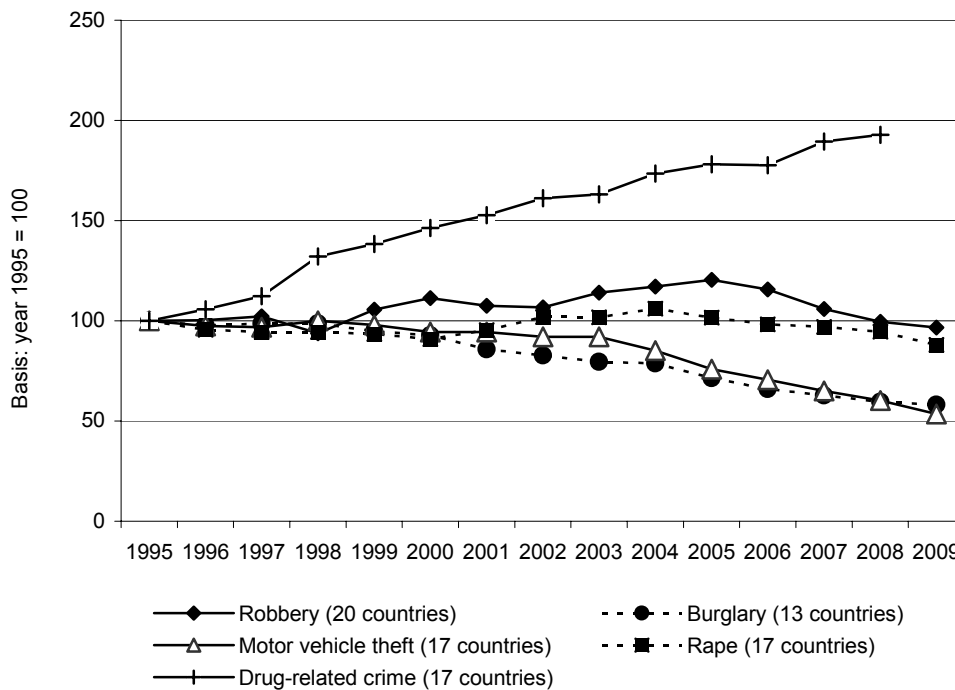
3. Equally invisible, at least to those who are neither direct victims nor perpetrators, are crimes related to the prominent theme of the twentieth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: “the misuse of technology in the abuse and exploitation of children”. A range of criminal offences may fall under that theme. Child pornography, which is almost always produced and distributed through the misuse of technology, is one example of such crime. Data collected by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on that specific offence suggest that recent years have seen some increase in the number of crimes recorded by the police involving the production, creation, distribution, sale or possession of child pornography, highlighting the need for national and international action on computer-facilitated crime and cybercrime.

4. With respect to conventional crime, figure I shows that during 2008 and 2009, broad trends of property-related crime, violent crime and drug-related crime continued as they had in recent years in countries for which long-term trend data are available (predominantly countries in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in North America, Asia and Oceania). In this set of countries, police-recorded levels of forms of property crime and violent crime showed some decrease in 2008 and 2009, compared with previous years. In contrast, police-recorded drug-related crime

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Third Year, Seventh Session, Supplement No. 8 and corrigendum (E/779 and Corr.1)*, para. 55.

continued to increase until 2008, the most recent year for which data are available for that type of crime.

Figure I
Trends in conventional types of crime in countries for which long-term trend data are available, 1995-2009



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

5. Long-running trends are not, however, the rule for all types of crime and in all areas of the world. In particular, trends in the crime of intentional homicide have seen significant changes in recent years, particularly in countries in the Americas region. Available data also suggest that the economic and financial crisis of 2008/2009 had an impact on both property and violent crime levels in a number of different countries. As such, the data and analysis contained in the present document do not provide a comprehensive picture of crime at the global level, but rather focus on some of the most recent developments in crime and criminal justice trends for which data are available.

6. The measurement of crime trends today has come a long way from the state of knowledge 60 years ago. This is due not only to the improvement of police-recorded administrative data but also to the introduction of population-based crime victimization surveys as a complementary, and even alternative, source to police-recorded crime data. In addition to overall rates for broad crime types, there is growing recognition of the need to obtain more detailed data on offence characteristics, such as the involvement of organized criminal groups and the relationship between victim and perpetrator. In addition, information on underlying factors or drivers of crime is crucial to placing criminal events in context and to

identifying entry points for crime, corruption and violence prevention and reduction initiatives. Nonetheless, while the volume and quality of information at the international level have doubtless increased, some of the challenges to data collection and analysis remain remarkably similar to those encountered by the drafters of the “Statistical report on the state of crime 1937-1946”. In addition to focusing on specific crime situations, the present document provides an overview of some of the methodological challenges in obtaining those data and details current work at the international level to address such challenges.

II. Trends in intentional homicide

7. Data on intentional homicide continue to represent one of the most robust and widely available indicators of serious crime and levels of interpersonal violence.² As indicated in the 2010 report of the Secretary-General on the state of crime and criminal justice worldwide (A/CONF.213/3), intentional homicide rates in many countries in Europe, Asia and Oceania are comparatively low and often decreasing. In contrast, homicide rates in a number of countries in the Americas and Africa are higher and in some cases are increasing. UNODC has been at the forefront of the development of global data in this area, with the UNODC homicide statistics database providing intentional homicide rates from multiple sources for 198 countries or territories.³

8. With improvements in data availability, the construct of medium- to long-term intentional homicide time series is becoming possible. In the past few years, for example, proliferations of crime, security and violence observatories in the Americas have been effective in promoting the use of homicide rates as a key policy tool for measuring and combating crime and violence.⁴ Section II of the present document focuses specifically on homicide data from the Americas and the possible use of such data in tracking organized crime and drug trafficking.

9. In contrast to other regions of the world, including Europe and Asia, where homicide rates are generally stable or decreasing, recent homicide data from countries in the Americas show preoccupying trends. Figures II and III show that seven countries in Central America saw increases in police-recorded homicide rates between 2007 and 2009. At least four countries in the Caribbean also showed that trend, with one country showing a fourfold increase in intentional homicide rates between 2000 and 2009.

² See, for example, Elisabeth Gilgen, Keith Krause and Robert Muggah, “Measuring and monitoring armed violence: goals, targets and indicators”, background paper prepared for the Oslo Conference on Armed Violence, Geneva, 12 May 2010.

³ See www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/homicide.html.

⁴ See Inter-American Observatory on Security of the Organization of American States. Available from www.oas.org/dsp/english/cpo_observatorio.asp.

Figure II
Intentional homicide trends for countries in Central America, 2000-2009

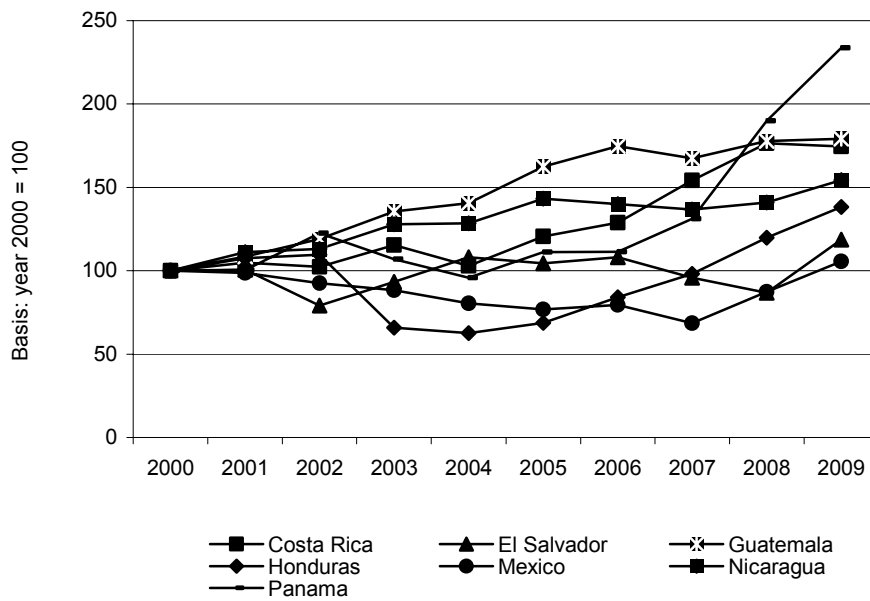
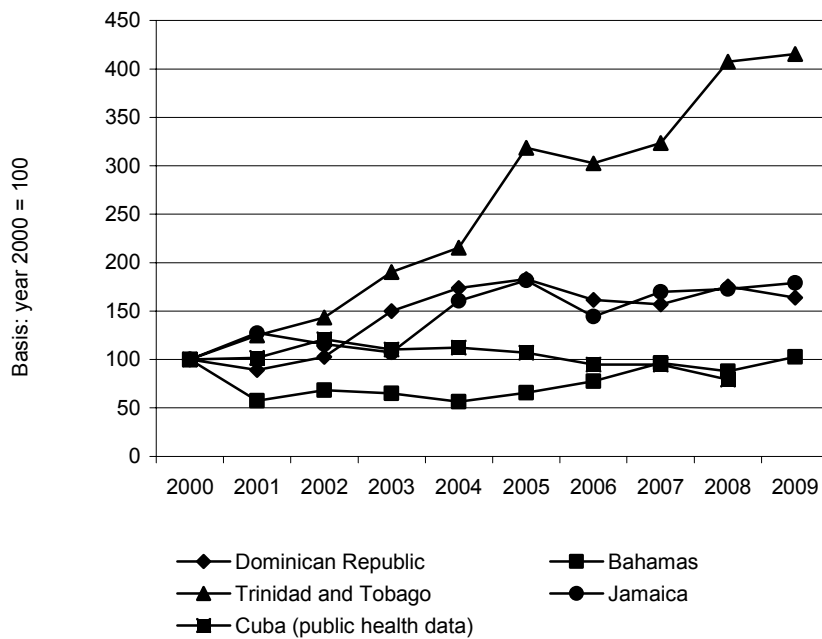


Figure III
Intentional homicide trends for countries in the Caribbean, 2000-2009



Source: UNODC homicide statistics (United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems and Government sources).

10. Understanding what lies behind such increases is crucial to developing an effective policy response. The series of events that lead to a violent death are many and varied. Lethal violence may occur, for example, in the context of the family, in social settings, in the workplace, in the course of another crime such as robbery or burglary, or be closely linked with activities of gangs or organized criminal groups. The use of a single “homicide” indicator for those qualitatively different situations has clear limitations. As a result, improved information on homicide typology is a current priority for UNODC. In particular, increased availability of information on homicides linked with gangs or criminal groups would offer one important indicator for changes in organized criminal activity.

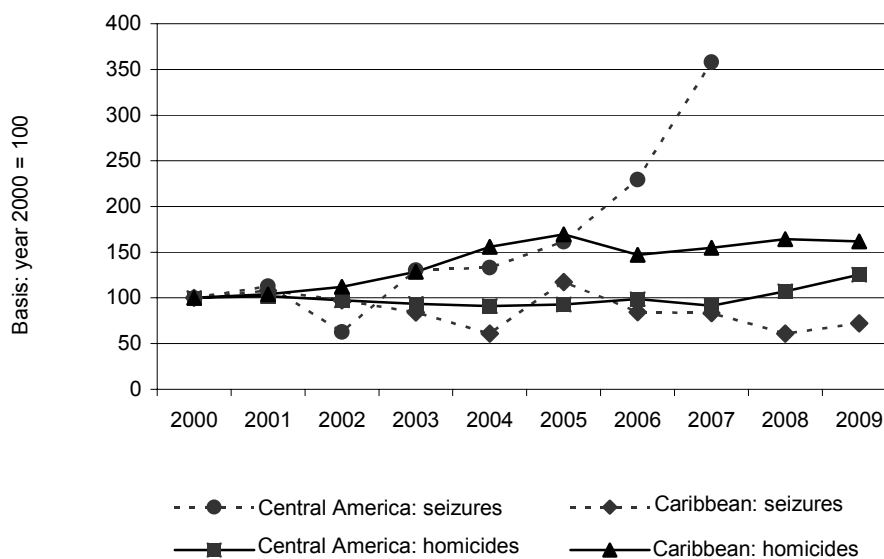
11. Nonetheless, at present, homicide typology data remain extremely limited at the international level. Police records may contain qualitative information on the homicide event, but the quality and level of detail recorded vary considerably, both within countries and cross-nationally. Based on the UNODC homicide statistics available for about 10 countries in the Americas for the period 2007-2009, the proportion of homicides attributable to violence perpetrated by gangs or organized criminal groups varied between 10 and just over 50 per cent. Crucially, in a number of countries that showed an increase in the overall homicide rate, this could be attributed to an increase in the proportion of homicides involving gangs or organized criminal groups.

12. This pattern may also be confirmed, at least for some countries, by developments in drug trafficking routes. Figure IV shows recent trends in seizures of cocaine (base and salt) for Central America (8 countries) and the Caribbean (12 countries), alongside trends in average regional homicide rates (same countries). The past decade has seen a shift in the routes used for cocaine trafficking — from routes leading through the Caribbean to routes leading through Central American countries. This is reflected in increased cocaine seizures in Central America and decreased seizures in the Caribbean. Both subregions also show overall homicide rate increases. Indeed, it is likely that it is changes in illicit markets and trade (rather than the existence of an illicit market per se) that lead to violence. As dominant gang or criminal structures change and develop new income sources, violence erupts as a result of criminal groups fighting over control of newly available “turf” and trafficking routes. In some countries in Central America, for example, the highest homicide rates observed are often found not in the largest cities of the subregion, but in the provinces that are of strategic value to drug traffickers.⁵

13. Initial data for 2010 suggest that a turning point may have been reached in at least some countries in the Americas. According to UNODC homicide statistics, preliminary results from police-recorded intentional homicide rates in El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama appear to be lower in 2010 than 2009. In contrast, the upward trend continued in 2010 in Honduras and Mexico.

⁵ *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.IV.6), p. 241.

Figure IV
Average intentional homicide trends and seizures of cocaine base and salts (kilogram equivalent) for Central America and the Caribbean, 2000-2009



Source: UNODC databases.

III. Economic factors and crime

14. Developments in illicit markets and flows, and crime rates themselves, cannot be isolated from the wider global economic situation. Criminal motivation theory proposes that illicit behaviours are caused, at least in part, by frustrations at the gap between aspirations and expectations, and their achievement in practice.⁶ During times of economic hardship, large numbers of individuals may suffer severe, and perhaps sudden, reductions in income. This, in turn, has the potential to cause an increase in the proportion of the population with a higher motivation to identify illegal solutions to their immediate problems.

15. The financial crisis of 2008/2009 resulted in negative growth in gross domestic product (GDP) for both emerging and developing economies and advanced economies during late 2008 and early 2009.⁷ Large numbers of persons faced lost employment, inability to purchase nutritious food, disproportionately high costs of living and growing tensions within families and communities.⁸ During the reporting period, UNODC engaged in a project in cooperation with the Global Pulse initiative to identify the impact of economic crisis on crime,⁹ in particular with the aim of

⁶ See, for example, Robert Agnew, "Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency", *Criminology*, vol. 30, No. 1 (1992), pp. 47-87.

⁷ See International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Update*. Update issues are available from www.imf.org/external/ns/cs.aspx?id=231.

⁸ Global Pulse initiative, "Voices of the vulnerable: recovery from the ground up", 2010.

⁹ Global Pulse is an initiative led by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. See www.unglobalpulse.org.

assessing whether the global financial crisis of 2008/2009 had resulted in increased crime levels. Such analysis requires specialized data. As apparent from the continuation in long-term trends shown in figure I, annual cross-national data for common types of crime, for example, are insufficiently sensitive to identify a possible relationship between crime and economic factors.

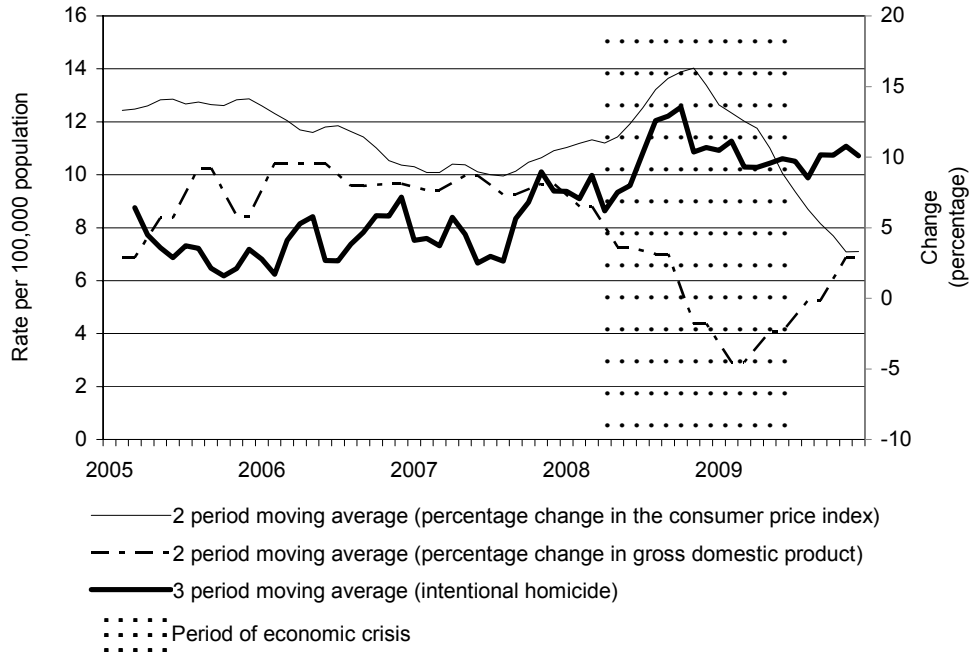
16. A different pattern is observed when high-frequency, monthly crime data are examined at the country level. Figure V shows examples of monthly police-recorded data for countries such as Costa Rica (intentional homicide), Thailand (motor vehicle theft) and Jamaica (intentional homicide).¹⁰ In each case, the country was affected by a decrease in GDP during 2008/2009 and increasing consumer prices (as measured by change in the consumer price index) or increasing unemployment. This coincided with a peak in the examined crime type, suggesting that economic stress may be associated with increases in property crime and/or violent crime short-term rates in specific country situations. However, results must be interpreted with caution. Crime figures recorded by the police are a construct of all underlying crime levels, reporting rates and police recording processes. Any of these may be affected positively or negatively in times of economic or financial crisis.

17. The interplay between underlying factors that affect crime levels is complex. In any particular country or region, it may be difficult to determine the factors that most affect crime rates. As the above-mentioned examples demonstrate, economic realities are important and in some contexts may even have a significant impact on well-established risk factors for crime, such as the existence of gangs. It may be the case, for instance, that structural changes in gangs (such as smaller gangs cutting loose from gang leadership structures in order to develop new sources of income) are associated in some way with a more restrictive economic environment. Unbalancing of the previous status quo may lead in turn to higher levels of recorded violent crime. UNODC will continue the analysis of available monthly crime data with a view to developing a general model for describing the relationship between underlying economic variables and changes in crime trends and to developing an early warning system for detecting emerging crime trends.

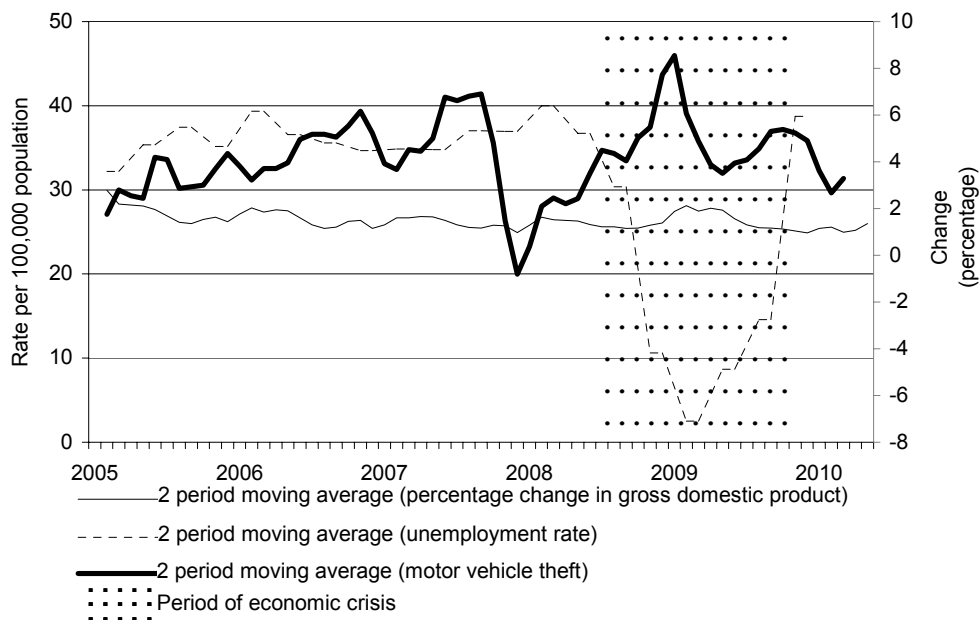
¹⁰ Data from Observatorio de la Violencia of Costa Rica, Royal Thai Police and the Jamaica Constabulary Force. Economic data sourced from International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics database. Available from www.imfstatistics.org/imf.

Figure V
Impact of the economic crisis on crime

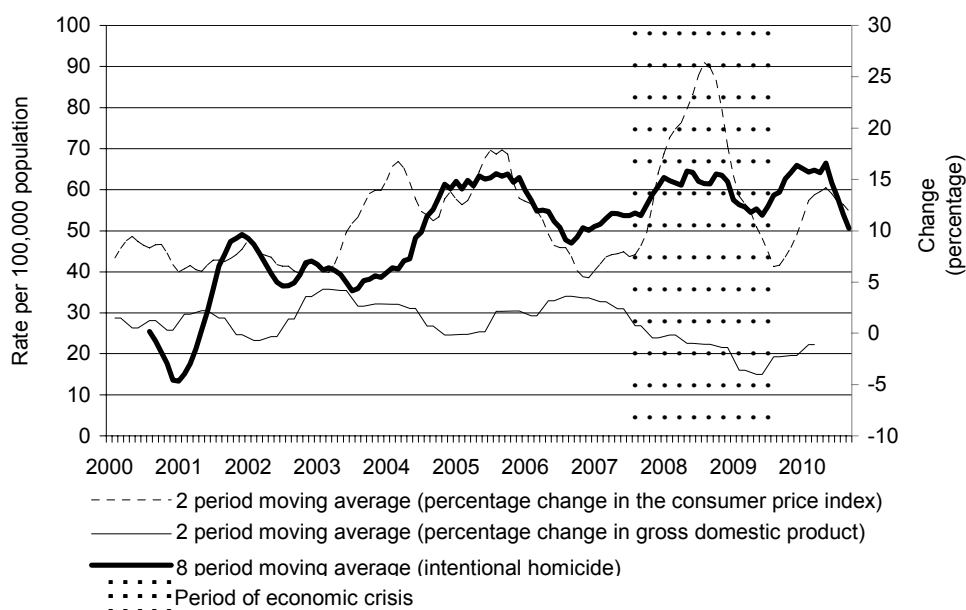
A. Costa Rica



B. Thailand



C. Jamaica



IV. Crime and victimization in Africa

18. The data and analysis provided so far in the present document are derived from police-recorded crime data. Police data have many strengths, including their permanent institutional nature and resultant time series trends. Nonetheless, in many countries, capacity for the generation of police and law enforcement statistics remains limited. In addition, police-recorded crime statistics capture only offences that are reported or otherwise come to the attention of police institutions. Crime victimization surveys offer an alternative view on the underlying level of crime in society by seeking direct information from a population-based sample of individuals and households. If carried out using standardized but locally tailored questionnaires, crime victimization surveys offer the further advantage of enhanced comparability between different national surveys. Moreover, through direct contact with potential victims of crime, population-based surveys may generate information on some of the more invisible types of crime, such as corruption, fraud and domestic violence.

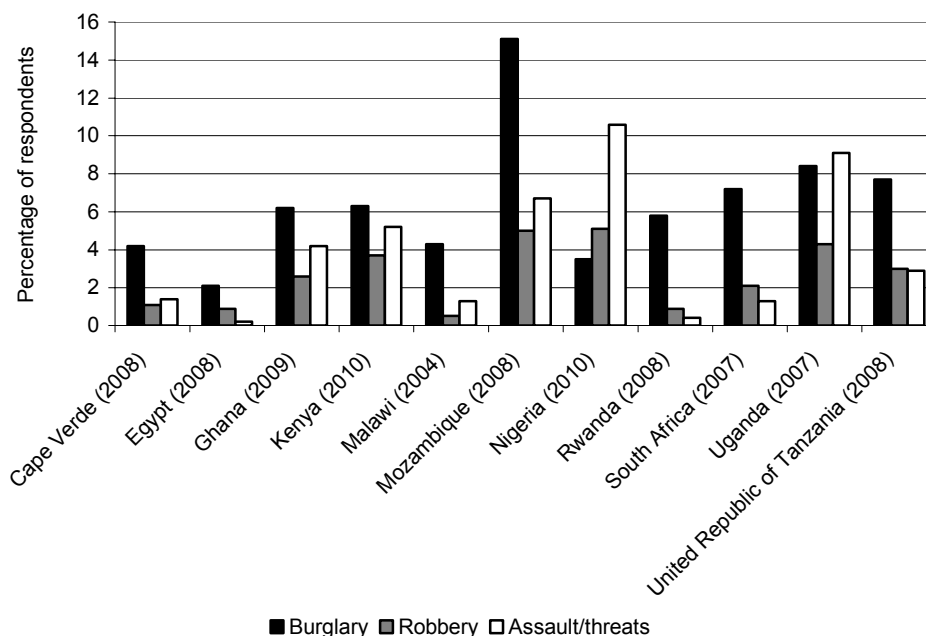
19. Crime victimization surveys are a key tool for crime statistics, especially in regions where law enforcement and criminal justice information systems face particular capacity-related challenges. UNODC has recently supported a series of crime victimization surveys in seven African countries, including Cape Verde (2008), Egypt (2008), Ghana (2009), Kenya (2010), Rwanda (2008), Uganda (2007) and the United Republic of Tanzania (2008).¹¹ Figure VI shows crime victimization

¹¹ Executive summaries of the crime victimization surveys are available from www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/Data-for-Africa-publications.html. The surveys used a standard questionnaire that was adapted, as necessary, to reflect local needs and understanding of crime and justice concepts. The surveys were carried out with sample numbers of between 1,800 (Cape Verde) and 3,100 persons (Egypt). The surveys in Cape Verde, Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda covered both urban and rural areas, while those in Ghana and the

rates (percentage of survey respondents) during a one-year period for burglary, assault/threats and robbery, estimated from responses to the seven surveys. They are presented together with rates from other recent crime victimization surveys in Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa. The results show considerable variation between African countries. Of the three types of crime, burglary typically affects the greatest proportion of respondents in African countries and, according to respondents, is particularly high in Mozambique. In contrast, of the three types of crime, assault/threats most affect respondents in Nigeria and Uganda. It should be noted that the survey question on assault/threats is particularly susceptible to differing respondent interpretation across countries.¹² Nonetheless, the significant difference in victimization rates for assault/threats compared with other countries in Africa does indicate a possible higher level of day-to-day violence in these countries. Victimization through violent contact crime is comparatively lower in Cape Verde, Egypt, Malawi, Rwanda and South Africa.

Figure VI

One-year victimization rates (percentage) for burglary, assault/threats and robbery in 11 countries in Africa



20. With respect to victimization through burglary, assault/threats and robbery, it is clear that respondents in African countries tend to experience higher victimization rates than respondents in a sample of developed countries. Figure VII shows average victimization rates for the three crimes in 11 African countries, compared

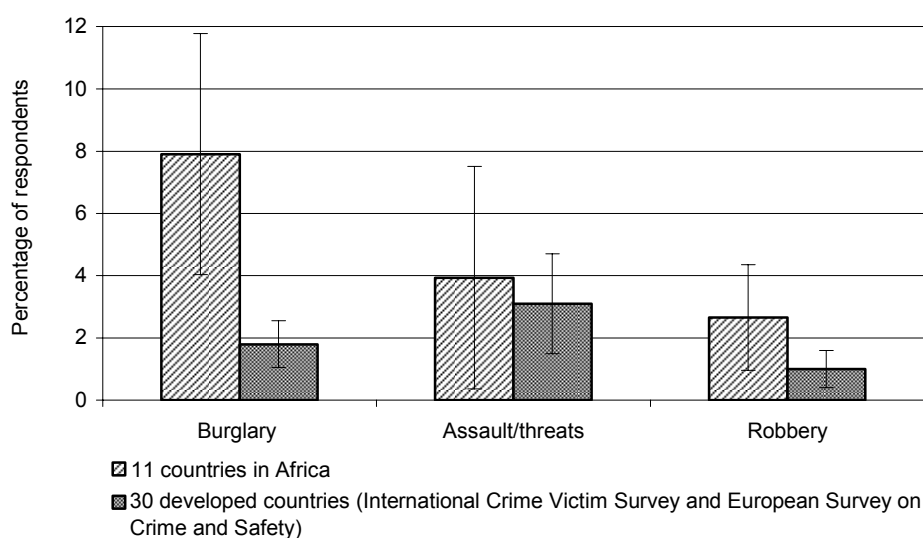
United Republic of Tanzania covered urban areas only.

¹² The survey question asked whether the respondent had been “personally attacked or threatened” in a way “that really frightened” them “either at home or elsewhere, such as in a pub, in the street, at school, on public transport, or at the workplace”.

with victimization rates for the same crimes in 30 developed countries (mostly European countries, but also Australia, Japan, Mexico and the United States of America). The clearest difference is in burglary rates, with a fourfold difference between the two data sets. It is possible that this is due to the more widespread use of effective home security measures in developed countries. Victimization through robbery is also higher in African countries by about threefold. In contrast, victimization through assault/threats is remarkably similar in African and developed countries.

Figure VII

One-year victimization rates (percentage) for burglary, assault/threats and robbery in 11 countries in Africa and 30 developed countries^a



^a Mean of one-year period of victimization rates (percentage) for African countries compared with mean of rates from the International Crime Victim Survey (2004-2005) and the European Survey on Crime and Safety (J. van Dijk, J. van Kesteren and P. Smit, *Criminal Victimization in International Perspective: Key Findings from the 2004-2005 ICVS and EU ICS* (The Hague, Boom Juridische uitgevers, 2007)). Error bars represent +/- one standard deviation of country victimization rates.

21. In addition to survey respondents encountering generally higher victimization rates for burglary, assault/threats and robbery in African countries, the police-reporting behaviour of respondents in Africa was also different from that in developed countries. Of the individuals who had experienced victimization in the past five years, figure VIII shows the average percentage who had reported the event to the police. While the proportion of assault/threats reported to the police is almost identical (about 30 per cent), reporting rates to the police for burglary and robbery are almost double in the sample of developed countries (about 70 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively) than in African countries (about 30 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively).

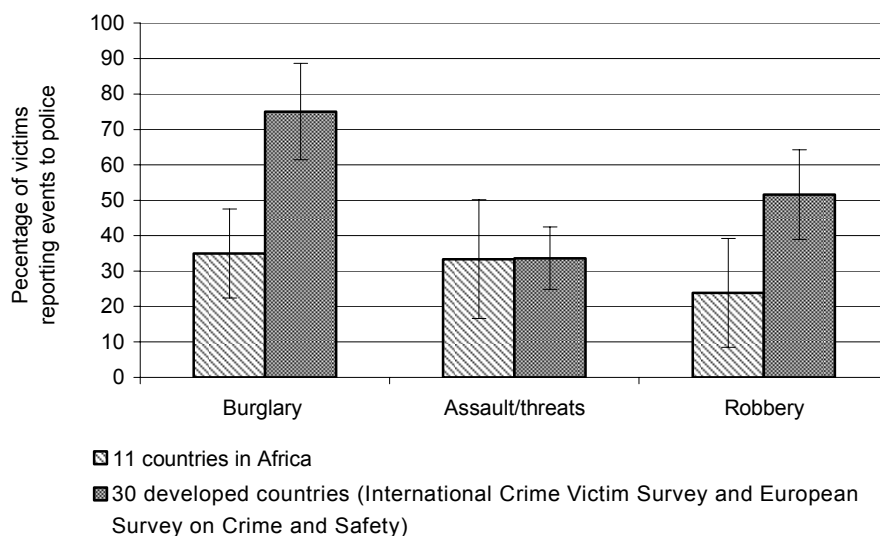
22. Again, results must be interpreted with caution, not least as a result of cross-national differences in societies, attitudes and perceptions. It is possible, for example, that the concept of what constitutes an assault or threat is interpreted

differently across countries, with generally less serious incidents making up a larger proportion of recalled victimization in developed countries. This, in turn, may affect police reporting rates for this type of crime. In addition, survey responses suggest that respondents in African countries may report particular types of crime to authorities other than the police, such as tribal elders or village councils. On average, 17 per cent of respondents in the UNODC Africa surveys who had not reported an assault/threat to the police stated that they had reported it to a different authority.

23. While police reporting rates may indicate a general reluctance to bring crime victimization to the attention of police forces in African countries, the picture is far from clear. Despite low crime reporting rates, survey respondents in African countries have, for instance, views on local police effectiveness that are remarkably similar to respondents in developed countries. Some 66 per cent of respondents in the UNODC Africa surveys stated that they believed the police were doing a good or very good job of controlling crime in their local area, compared with 70 per cent in the 30 developed countries. It is likely that multiple factors influence crime reporting rates in African countries. Fear of police contact and corruption, a perception of police as controlling public order rather than providing a service for victims, expectations that the police “will not do anything” and, in particular, lack of property insurance may all contribute to low police reporting rates in African countries.

Figure VIII

Reporting to police events involving burglary, assault/threats or robbery in 11 countries in Africa and 30 developed countries



24. Overall, data from crime victimization surveys in Africa indicate that day-to-day conventional crime levels are significantly higher than in many developed countries. UNODC surveys conducted in Africa suggest that individuals in the 11 countries surveyed have about a 15 per cent chance of becoming victims of a burglary, an assault/threat or a robbery in one year. As such, conventional (and indeed organized) crime in Africa can seriously impede development and have a negative effect on people’s sense of security, safety and well-being. A comparison of

the results from the most recent round of crime victimization surveys with those of earlier rounds conducted in Africa around the year 2000, suggests that rates of contact crime and property crime today are largely similar to what they were 10 years ago.¹³ Such persistently high levels of insecurity degrade the quality of life and can induce skilled workers to go overseas. By limiting movement and eroding trust, crime impedes access to employment and educational opportunities. While high levels of income inequality may sometimes result in individuals and businesses perceived to have wealth being targeted for crime, results from the surveys suggest that violent crime and property crime equally affect those with lower household incomes. This discourages accumulation of assets by all sectors of society, dissuades foreign and domestic investors and perpetuates a cycle of slow economic growth and development.

25. A high level of conventional crime is not the only challenge facing Africa. Violence, including widespread killing and sexual violence, perpetrated during internal or international conflict cannot be captured by victimization surveys and is rarely recorded by law enforcement institutions, which may themselves even participate as parties to a conflict. Indeed, public health estimates for death by violence are as high, if not higher, in many African countries than in many countries in the Americas.¹⁴

V. Corruption

26. The presence of corruption is a key inhibitor to the effective functioning not only of law enforcement and criminal justice systems but also of all democratic institutions. Actual acts of corruption are largely hidden or invisible, but their ultimate effects, whether in the form of diverted resources, unequal treatment or miscarriage of justice, can be substantial and highly visible. At the same time, corruption frequently facilitates forms of organized crime, enabling criminal groups to bypass State controls and to operate illicit markets. Understanding the nature and extent of corruption, including the different forms of corruption, is central to the development of anti-corruption strategies and actions. UNODC promotes evidence-based approaches to the measurement of corruption, including the conduct of sample surveys on corruption and integrity. In the same way as crime victimization surveys, random sample corruption surveys allow for the direct collection of data on the experience of individuals, households and businesses.

27. With the support of the European Union, UNODC completed a series of corruption and integrity surveys during 2010 in the countries and areas in the western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.¹⁵ The general population household surveys included a series of questions on contact with public officials, experiences with requests for and payment of bribes, as well as perception-based

¹³ See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and Development in Africa* (June 2005).

¹⁴ See, for example, World Health Organization, death and disability-adjusted life year (DALY) estimates for 2004. Available from www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/estimates_country/en/index.html.

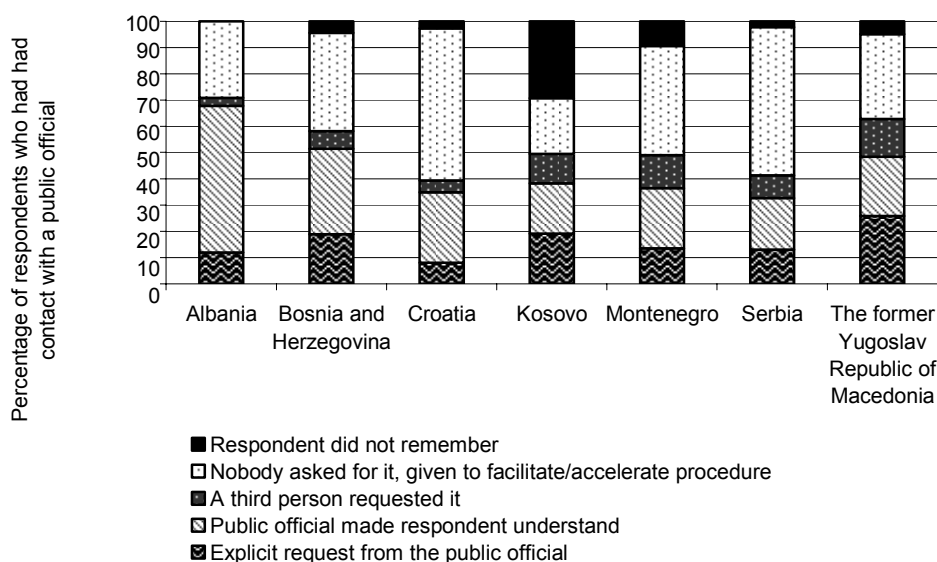
¹⁵ Surveys were carried out with sample groups of between 3,000 (Serbia) and 5,000 persons (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro). All surveys covered both urban and rural areas.

questions on levels of corruption and integrity and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.

28. Survey responses indicated that, in each country or area in the western Balkans, 6-20 per cent of respondents who had had contact with a public official in the past year had reported that they had paid at least one bribe. Respondents who had paid a bribe at least once during the year, had done so on average between 4 and 11 times. The overall subregional average was 5 times. Figure IX shows the nature of the transaction among respondents who had had contact with a public official in the past year and had paid a bribe. In the subregion as a whole, about the same proportion of respondents indicated that they had taken the initiative to offer a bribe as those who had said that the public official had explicitly requested a payment or had led the respondent to understand that such a payment was required.

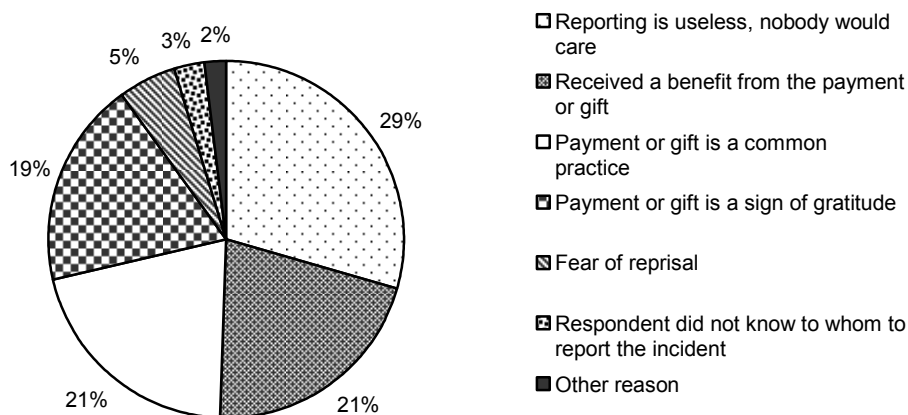
Figure IX

Modality of requests for offers of bribes for respondents who had had contact with a public official in the past year and had paid a bribe in countries or areas in the western Balkans



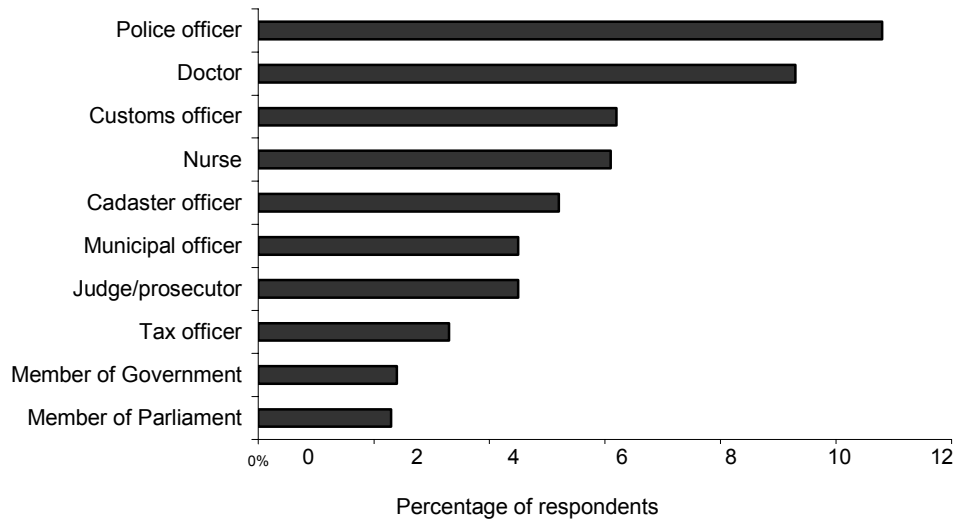
29. The danger that corruption can become widely accepted is also apparent from responses given to the question concerning whether individuals had made an additional payment or gift to any official authority or institution. On average, in the seven countries or areas, under 2 per cent of respondents who had paid a bribe indicated that they had reported the bribe to an official authority or institution. When asked why they had not reported the event, over 60 per cent of respondents stated that they had received a benefit from the payment or gift, that the payment or gift was common practice or that the payment or gift was a sign of gratitude. Answers also suggested that corruption might be perceived as a low priority by law enforcement officials and criminal justice institutions with which the public had day-to-day contact. Some 30 per cent of respondents stated that “reporting was useless” or that “nobody would care”. Figure X shows the average distribution of responses in the subregion as a whole to the question on non-reporting of bribes paid.

Figure X
Reasons for not reporting the payment of a bribe to an official authority or institution in the western Balkans



30. With respect to the type of public official to whom bribes were paid, respondents indicated that the public official most often involved was a police officer. Figure XI shows the percentage of respondents out of those who had had contact with each type of public official in the past year, who had paid a bribe to that official. In the subregion as a whole, over 10 per cent of persons who had had contact with a police officer in the past year had paid a bribe to the officer. About 5 per cent of respondents who had had contact with a judge or prosecutor in the past year had made a payment or given a gift. The reported involvement of law enforcement and justice officials in corruption is of particular concern. Police and justice institutions that are not fully committed to integrity are a serious impediment to the effective administration of justice, the rule of law and the success of any anti-corruption strategy or action. In contrast to indications from corruption and integrity surveys in other parts of the world, bribes in the western Balkans had also been paid to doctors and nurses comparatively frequently. Some 9 and 6 per cent of persons having had contact with those officials, respectively, in the past year, had ended up paying a bribe to them.

Figure XI
Respondents who had paid bribes in the past year to public officials in the western Balkans as a percentage of those who had had contact with the officials, by type of public official



VI. Misuse of technology in the abuse and exploitation of children

31. As hidden as corruption, if not even more so, are crimes related to the prominent theme of the twentieth session of the Commission: “the misuse of technology in the abuse and exploitation of children”. Criminal offences falling under the theme may range from the misuse of Internet bulletin boards or chat rooms to recruit children for trafficking or exploitative labour, to the creation of child pornography using digital picture and video technology, to its electronic distribution through such means as the Internet, e-mail and instant or picture/video messaging. Not all such crimes may involve organized criminal groups.¹⁶ Many do, however, and news reports across the world frequently highlight groups of persons who have acted in concert with the aim of committing serious offences against children through the misuse of technology.

32. The Twelfth United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems requested information from Member States on police-recorded offences involving child pornography and possession of child pornography.¹⁷ By the beginning of 2011, 20 States had provided responses to the

¹⁶ An “organized criminal group” is defined in article 2 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with the Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.

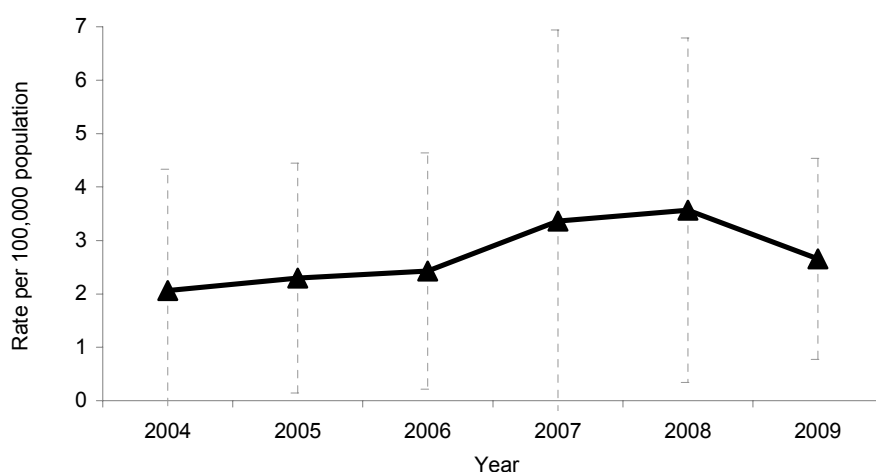
¹⁷ For the purposes of data collection, statistics on “total child pornography offences” were requested concerning “the production, creation, distribution, dissemination, broadcast,

questions. The majority had completed the question on total child pornography offences, with only nine States providing data on possession of child pornography offences. Of the States that had provided data on total child pornography offences, some 13 had provided a whole time series for recorded offences from 2004 to 2009. Almost all States indicated that the offence descriptions provided by UNODC corresponded to those used at the national level for data collection purposes.

33. Figure XII provides the average rate of police-recorded total child pornography offences for 12 States in Europe and North America. Of the 13 States that reported complete time series data, 1 was excluded from figure XII owing to figures of a significantly different order of magnitude from those provided by other States. It is likely that this arose due to the application of different counting rules or law enforcement policies in that country. Average rates of police-recorded child pornography offences are low compared with other types of crime, being slightly above typical intentional homicide rates in Europe. The trend for the 12 countries showed a gradual increase between 2004 and 2008, followed by a decrease in 2009. It is, however, difficult to ascertain from police administrative data the extent to which the level and trend are reflective of underlying crime events, rather than changes in crime detection and law enforcement activity.

Figure XII

Rate of police-recorded total child pornography offences for 12 countries in Europe and North America, 2004-2009^a



^a Data from Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Slovenia and Sweden. Trend represents a mean of country rates. Error bars represent +/- one standard deviation of individual country rates.

transmission, exhibition, sale, or making available in any way, procurement, intentional accessing or viewing, receipt, storage or possession of child pornography". Statistics on "possession of child pornography offences" were requested on acts from "procurement" to "possession" in the explanation for total child pornography offences. "Child pornography" itself was characterized as "any representation, by whatever means, of a real or fictional person under 18 years of age, or appearing to be under 18 years of age, engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes".

34. For countries that provided data both for total child pornography offences and possession of child pornography offences, the proportion of total offences that constituted possession was typically quite high, ranging between 60 and over 90 per cent. The trends for possession of child pornography offences also showed a pattern similar to that of total offences, with broad increases in police-recorded possession offences between 2004 and 2009.

35. Overall, data on child pornography offences collected through the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems demonstrate that a number of States do generate statistics on specialized forms of computer-facilitated crime that may be perpetrated by organized criminal groups. While it is possible to follow trends in such data, interpretation is necessarily limited by the fact that statistics include only offences that come to the attention of the police. Increases or decreases in recorded offences may be due to changes in law enforcement activity, rather than underlying crime event levels. While the response to the questions on the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems regarding the misuse of technology for the abuse and exploitation of children is encouraging, there is a need, as discussed at the meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental expert group on cybercrime held in Vienna from 17 to 21 January 2011, to develop further techniques for the collection and analysis of such data.

VII. Criminal justice responses

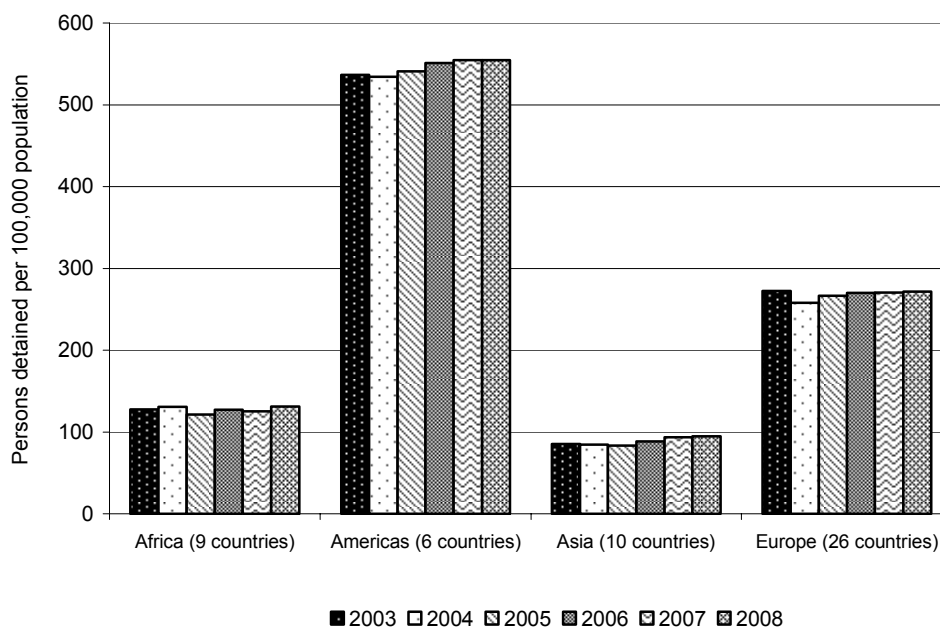
36. Statistics on the operation of the criminal justice system are as important as those that relate to underlying crime rates. Where information on the treatment of individuals brought into contact with the criminal justice system is not available, the impact of the system in terms of effective crime prevention and the successful rehabilitation of offenders cannot be evaluated. In particular, statistics on the use of deprivation of liberty represent one important indicator for the overall response of the criminal justice system. Deprivation of liberty can be applied at all stages of the system, from arrest, in the form of a preventative measure, to post-sentencing as both a protective and rehabilitative measure. International human rights standards provide that the severity of penalties must not be disproportionate to the criminal offence and that imprisonment should be used as a penalty of last resort.

37. Detention appears to be increasingly used as a response measure to crime. Previous analysis published by UNODC found that prison population rates rose between 1997 and 2007 in 91 of 134 countries (68 per cent) for which data were available.¹⁸ As shown in figure XIII below, more recent data reported for the Eleventh Survey, covering the years 2003-2008, also show a slight increase in overall detention rate for 6 countries in the Americas and 10 countries in Asia. Figure XIII further highlights significant differences in overall detention rates between regions. For 6 countries in the Americas, the population-weighted detention rate in 2009 was just over twice that for 26 countries in Europe. Countries in both

¹⁸ Roy Walmsley, "Trends in world prison population", in *International Statistics on Crime and Justice*, S. Harrendorf, M. Heiskanen and S. Malby, eds., HEUNI Publication Series, No. 64 (Helsinki, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, and UNODC, 2010).

the Americas and Europe showed higher detention rates than the countries in Africa and Asia for which data were available.

Figure XIII
Regional detention rates, 2003-2008



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

38. In the Americas and Africa, around two thirds of countries for which data were available had over 30 per cent of their prison population in pretrial detention, and more than one third had over 50 per cent in such conditions. By contrast, only one fifth of European countries for which data were available had over 30 per cent of their prison population in pretrial detention, and only three countries had over 50 per cent in such conditions.¹⁸

VIII. Work towards better data

39. At the meeting of the International Group of Experts on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders held in November 1950, a member noted that there was no longer any need to stress the importance of crime statistics and that since the beginning of the twentieth century, in particular during the past 20 or 30 years, numerous efforts had been made to improve crime statistics and produce them by a strictly scientific method (see E/CN.5/AC.4/L.4, para. 1). While the same could be said today, some 60 years on, there remains as much work to be done, if not more, than what was perceived in 1950. The increasingly cross-national nature of crime requires a coordinated and truly global approach to data collection based on regular and comprehensive reporting of crime and criminal justice data by Member States. Emerging types of crime, such as forms of organized crime, including cybercrime, and an emphasis on understanding and measuring largely

hidden phenomena such as corruption further require the collection of complex data sets through multiple methods, including both administrative and survey statistics.

40. The improvement and computerization of national police, prosecution, court and penal information systems have led to the availability of greatly increased data quantities, with improving levels of data disaggregation according to victim, perpetrator and event characteristics. The international community requires access to such contextual data in order to more accurately inform the development of crime prevention and violence reduction strategies. In addition to offering opportunities in terms of improved knowledge, the increasing amount and sophistication of national-level data, however, present challenges for the collection and analysis of data at the international level.

41. National crime data systems are almost always developed in line with national needs, legal codes and local definitions of crime. In Europe alone, for example, some 52 distinct national offence classification systems have been identified.¹⁹ When it comes to data collection at the international level, there is a need to ensure, so far as possible, comparability of national data. With a view to increasing data comparability, UNODC, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe, is engaged in the development of principles for an international crime classification system.²⁰ The development of such a system would not solve all challenges related to the cross-national comparability of crime statistics. It would, however, offer a common basis for coding and recording of criminal acts or events at the point of reporting to and registration by the police, and it would act as a common standard for presentation of existing statistical data in a standardized format.

42. The increased availability and quality of data from criminal justice systems will also need to be complemented by a parallel development of data from victimization surveys. Experience shows that important information needs can be met through the collection of data from victims of crime, such as on the prevalence of crime victimization, the reporting of crime to public authorities and the profiling of victims' and citizens' perceptions of safety from crime. Further methodological work on victimization surveys is needed to adapt them to different contexts and to capture information on emerging topics, such as on violence against women and on the link between crime and development. Crime victimization surveys have become widely used among developed countries, while their use is still in its early stages in most developing countries. UNODC will continue to provide methodological support to States willing to conduct such surveys and make efforts to raise additional resources for States wishing to implement them.

43. The data provided in the present document demonstrate the advances that have been made in crime and criminal justice statistics since the pioneering work of the Social Commission in 1950. Through the annual implementation of the United

¹⁹ European Commission, UNISYS and Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy, *Study on the Development of an EU-Level Offence Classification System and an Assessment of its Feasibility to Support Implementation of the Action Plan to Develop an EU Strategy to Measure Crime and Criminal Justice: Crime Statistics Project* (n.p., n.d.). Available from http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/doc_centre/crime/docs/eulocs_en.pdf.

²⁰ See "Terms of reference of UNECE/UNODC task force on crime classification", prepared for the Statistical Commission and Economic Commission for Europe, Conference of European Statistics, first meeting of the 2009/2010 Bureau, Washington, D.C., 15 and 16 October 2009 (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/OCT/12).

Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, technical support to Member States for the conduct of victimization surveys and the strengthening of law enforcement and criminal justice information systems, and research and analysis on key topics, such as intentional homicide and the impact of economic factors on crime, UNODC will continue to work towards better data and an improved evidence base for effective decision-making at the international level.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

44. The information provided in the present document shows how timely data on crime trends can provide the evidence to understand the nature and causes of crime and can support crime prevention and the promotion of safety and security. The data indicate that crime is increasingly affected by transnational factors, such as the global financial crisis, global drug trafficking and organized crime. This may particularly be the case in regions experiencing a growth in violent crime. As such, evidence-based crime prevention strategies should explore how local law enforcement and governance may be strengthened as part of a global strategy to stem illicit trafficking flows. As an integral part of such a strategy, there is the need for continued efforts to strengthen police and judicial integrity and capacity in line with the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

45. As demonstrated by victimization surveys, addressing crime and violence in all its manifestations in Africa requires the development of just, accountable and effective law enforcement and criminal justice institutions. Although persons may express confidence in police services, in practice, both violent and property crime is reported to the police in only about one third of cases in countries surveyed in Africa. Building public trust in the criminal justice system through strengthened capacity and integrity is crucial to effective crime prevention and sustainable security and development.

46. Results from corruption surveys highlight the complexity of addressing the two-way nature of corruption as a phenomenon. Where corruption becomes ingrained as a way of “doing business” owing to historically weak rule-of-law or State institutions, irregular payments or bribes become normalized. Individuals might then offer additional payments or gifts as a matter of course, with the expectation of receiving a particular benefit such as the speeding up of an otherwise lengthy administrative procedure. This indicates a need to make anti-corruption measurements applicable to all parties in a transaction, with a view to both changing public attitudes and promoting integrity in public office.

B. Recommendations

47. It is recommended that the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice encourage Member States to continue to collect and report both survey-based and administrative data on crimes of a hidden nature, including corruption and forms of organized crime. Methodologies for approaches to data collection for such forms of crime may benefit from further

expert consultation. With a view to improving the quality and usefulness of crime and criminal justice data, it is also recommended that the Commission urge Member States to consider further disaggregating currently available data, in order to describe the typology of crime events, the characteristics of victims and perpetrators and the nature of the victim-offender relationship involved.

48. It is recommended that the Commission promote analysis of the relationship between crime levels and underlying or associated factors, such as economic indicators. With a view to enabling the timely identification of emerging trends, it is recommended that the Commission encourage Member States to share high-frequency, timely crime data at the international level and to consider and promote the establishment of crime observatories at all levels, including the local, national and regional levels.
