

Speech by

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Crime Prevention and Treatment of Offenders**

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Introduction

- Thank you Your Excellency Ambassador Songsak Saicheua and Mr Jeremy Douglas for co-organizing this event with the Thailand Institute of Justice.
- We at the Thailand Institute of Justice are committed to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies aligned with the rule of law and a rights-based criminal justice system. As a member of the Programme Network of Institutes, one of our key missions is to enhance the ability of the criminal justice system to respond to crime and to support all UN member states and entities through capacity building, academic contribution, and network strengthening.
- With the adoption of the Doha Declaration at the 13th Crime Congress and the Sustainable Development Goals by the General Assembly, the international community gave clear recognition to the fact that sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace, justice, strong institutions and the rule of law. To build upon this consensus and to advance the

implementation of the SDGs is where a development-led approach to crime prevention and the treatment of offenders is relevant.

Root Causes and Development-led Interventions

- In my presentation today I will cover and touch upon the linkages between the criminal justice system and sustainable development. I will also highlight the elements of a development-led approach to crime prevention and treatment of offenders.
- The development-led approach involves multi-stakeholder interventions that target the root causes of specific types of crime at the individual and community level. It is a framework that broadens the scope of interventions beyond the justice sector to address and respond to violence and crime.
- In this regard, development policies and interventions need to focus on addressing the root causes with the understanding that there is no simple cause-and-effect relationship or an easy one-size-fits-all solution, because crime and violence is often the result of complex and interrelated social, economic, cultural and family factors.
- Prior to designing interventions it is necessary to first identify the root cause of criminality and the environmental conditions and factors that led a person to commit a crime or even become a victim of crime themselves. Evidence-based research, data and statistics on prisoners and their communities as well as on communities affected by crime can be a starting point to provide insight into the root causes.

- Due to this complexity, a development-led approach needs to be multi-disciplinary and to involve partnerships between criminal justice sectors and other relevant government agencies, as well as the private sector and community-based organizations.

A People-Centred Approach and Criminal Justice

- There are many aspects to implementing a development-led approach. Due to the shortage of time, I want to focus on one key element, which is the application of a people-centred approach to the criminal justice landscape. We must refrain from criminalizing our most socially and economically vulnerable populations, and instead apply policies that improve equal opportunity and invest in vulnerable communities and at-risk populations.
- Within the current context of Thailand, a context which resonates in many other countries as well, the most vulnerable groups are often our women and children, particularly as victims not only of structural inequality but also of violence. For example, it is estimated by UN WOMEN that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual violence at some point in their life. From TIJ's research in female prisons, we also discovered that 52 percent of the women in our prisons have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse by a spouse or a family member.

- Further, last year joint research by the TIJ and UNODC on trafficking in persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar to Thailand found that many women and child victims of trafficking came from poor rural communities. In many cases their families did not own land and were in debt, leading them to migrate in search of work to earn an income for their families. Due to their circumstances, they were more vulnerable to exploitation.
- Many criminologists have debated how to reduce violence and crime when the cause is structural. In order to end the vicious cycle of poverty and crime, we should focus on a development-led approach by addressing the vulnerabilities and disadvantages of the most at-risk groups. These are the people in our prisons, low income urban neighbourhoods, and poor rural communities. These approaches need to be people-centred and promote human security and development. Depending on the needs of the individuals or communities, the approaches can be initiatives that foster skills training to improve employment opportunities, promote gender equality, and allow children to grow up in safe environments in stable and nurturing relationships, reducing violence against women and children, and change cultural and social norms.
- Having worked for many decades at the Thai Ministry of Justice, I am aware that striking this right balance is difficult, and yet I have always worked towards achieving it. For example, I have championed policies and encouraged increasing public participation in the criminal justice system by involving communities in reconciliation and restorative justice initiatives, including community justice. At the same time I also sought to increase

capacity-building to broaden the perspectives and change the attitudes of justice professionals towards adopting a more people- and victim-centred approach to their work. This involves looking beyond the crime itself to also understand the circumstances that explain why the offender committed the crime. There are many cases where alternatives to imprisonment can be more suitable as a means to provide more opportunities for the offender to not re-offend, reduce stigma and increase opportunities, while also considering the impact of imprisonment on their families.

- In addition to striking the right balance, other key challenges often relate to political will, changing of mindsets and long-term funding that invests in people and communities. It takes time to achieve results, but with the right system in place to collect data and statistics along with appropriate policy reforms, impacts can be measured. This is where the SDGs and international standards and norms can be tools to guide this change in the criminal justice landscape.
- In closing, for those interested to learn more about development-led crime prevention and treatment of offenders please find TIJ's booklet on this concept at the back of this room and on the side event table outside of the plenary. As a Programme Network Institute we continue to support Member States and UNODC to promote safer, peaceful and inclusive societies through a development-led and people-centred approach for each and everyone in society.
- Thank you.