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OPENING STATEMENT

OF

**THE HONORABLE LAURIE ROBINSON
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

AT THE

**NINTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS
ON THE PREVENTION OF CRIME
AND TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS**

**APRIL 29, 1995
CAIRO, EGYPT**

Let me begin by expressing our compliments to the Congress host, the Government of Egypt, and indeed to all of the African countries, on the first occasion that a United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders is being held on the African continent. We also wish to congratulate the President of the meeting and the other Vice-Presidents on their election. In addition, we would like to thank Mr. Eduardo Vetere, the Executive Secretary, and the staff of the Crime Branch for their excellent efforts to organize this Congress and for their assistance to our delegation in preparing for this important forum.

Our government is pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this Congress and to be able to discuss with other Member States the most pressing problem of crime--how to prevent it, how to sanction and rehabilitate criminal offenders, and how to improve the operations of our justice systems. Our government has made the issue of crime, particularly violent crime and its impact on our people, a top priority. The American people share with their world neighbors a tremendous concern about the problem of crime--and a deep commitment to working together to find solutions.

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With the passage last fall of major federal legislation, our government is moving in new directions to assist our states and localities to combat crime and violence. With this assistance, communities throughout the United States are now hiring additional law enforcement officers, implementing community-oriented policing, establishing specialized courts to handle drug cases and divert nonviolent offenders to treatment, experimenting with nontraditional sanctions for appropriate offenders, and taking a more comprehensive, community-based approach to dealing with problems such as violence against women, drug abuse, and gang violence.

We also are continuing to focus on improving our justice system's response to the victims of crime and ensuring that victims have a voice in the criminal justice process. We look forward to exchanging ideas about these important issues with other Member States at this Congress.

While this is the Ninth United Nations Congress on the issues of crime prevention and criminal justice, it is the first to be held since the crime program was restructured in 1991 and an intergovernmental

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commission was created to make the program more accountable and more responsive to Member States.

Precisely because this is the first Congress to be held after the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was established, we have a real opportunity and responsibility to establish how such a meeting should relate to the overall Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Program.

The new importance of workshops and demonstrations at this Congress is an encouraging sign that it is possible to make these gatherings cost-effective occasions for the exchange of experience, knowledge, and technology. Such exchanges will lead inevitably to follow-up activities as we come to know each other's problems and resources and identify areas where we should work together bilaterally, regionally, or multilaterally, including contacts through the U.N. Crime Program.

Our delegation has given whole-hearted support to the Crime Branch in this regard. Our Government is organizing and actively participating in several workshops and demonstration projects that we hope will contribute to making this Cairo Congress a point of departure

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for future activities that we can similarly support, both bilaterally and otherwise, in areas such as anti-corruption measures, criminal justice information systems, extradition, and training and technical assistance coordination.

In our view, this practical orientation of the Ninth Congress, designed to initiate exchanges and encourage future cooperation between and among Member States, is a welcome guarantee of an added value to be contributed by our gathering here. We also can ensure a harmonious and constructive relationship with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice if we observe this practical orientation.

Since its creation in 1991, that Commission has been charged with the responsibility to set policy for and to oversee the implementation of the Crime Program, functions that a Congress meeting every five years cannot perform effectively. This Congress, with its broader representation of Member States and greater participation of practitioners and experts, can play a more academic and practitioner-oriented role than that of the Commission. We can compare our experiences in the working world of criminal justice

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systems, identify new problems to be addressed, and new approaches that merit attention. Our workshops here can be international laboratories in which each of our delegations share in the research and discoveries of the experts of the entire world.

We also applaud the Secretariat's efforts within every workshop to concentrate attention on follow-up activities by and between Member States to achieve a multiplier effect--that is, to spread the lessons of the workshops beyond their immediate audience without creating additional demands for budgetary resources. This approach of seeking the maximum immediate return on the resources invested by the United Nations or by the voluntary contribution of services by a Member State is consistent with the policy of the Commission to emphasize the delivery of training and technical assistance, rather than the creation of new instruments, as the principal priority of the Crime Program for the near future.

In our view, developing ways to directly achieve observable improvements in the operational capacities of crime prevention and criminal justice systems is a goal that our delegation considers more important for this Congress than the consideration of specific

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resolutions. Certainly, the resolutions before us deal with important principles that merit our careful attention, as do the resource implications of the proposed mandates. Yet those resolutions should not monopolize our attention. In reality, they have meaning only when translated into action in our individual countries, where crime is actually prevented and criminal justice is administered.

That said, we appreciate the efforts of those Member States that submitted draft resolutions by the deadline of December 28, 1994 so that all of us could receive them for review well before the Congress. My delegation believes that this Congress will benefit greatly if all its rules of procedure are strictly observed in similar fashion.

A resolution is only one of many means to achieve international cooperation. Our delegation sees in this Congress an opportunity for fruitful cooperation at an even more direct level. On May first, second, and third, a team of representatives from our law enforcement agencies will make presentations on the training that we provide for law enforcement professionals. The team members will explain the menu of courses that we have available and the circumstances in which those courses may be made available in your countries or for

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representatives of your law enforcement agencies. The team members will also be available to respond to any questions you may have. The presentations will be made in a number of the official languages at a room here in the Conference Center. Explanatory brochures will also be available. We invite you to attend to compare training experiences or to explore whether there may be mutually interesting training opportunities worthy of further discussion.

At another workshop on May second and third, representatives from the research arm of the United States Department of Justice --the National Institute of Justice--will demonstrate ways in which we are using and promoting the use of advanced information technologies, most specifically the Internet, to communicate criminal justice information more efficiently. We also invite you to attend this workshop.

In addition, the United States has helped organize a workshop on the subject of international extradition, which will take place on May 3rd. Workshop participants will include experienced specialists from many nations and legal traditions. Speakers will discuss the availability of extradition mechanisms, problems in the preparation of extradition

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documents, problems in the execution of extradition requests, and policy issues concerning impediments to extradition. The aim is to promote an exchange of ideas on the practical aspects of the apprehension and extradition of offenders, and to consider how, in pragmatic terms, extradition and other international cooperative mechanisms should function. We invite all of you to attend this workshop.

These are examples of the kinds of exchanges that we think can be the most valuable contribution of this Congress.

We look forward very much to developing those kinds of personal and professional contacts with you, and to working with you to make this a successful and productive Congress. Thank you.