

# THE XVII WORLD CONGRESS OF CRIMINOLOGY: A REPORT

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The XVII World Congress of Criminology was celebrated in Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2014.

The World Congress of Criminology is the foremost criminology event that brings together the best academics, researchers, professionals and policy makers to discuss the most relevant and current issues related to crime and deviance and their prevention under the aegis of the International Society for Criminology.

## **Historic significance**

This World Congress had a special importance because it was part of the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the very first Congress of the Society.

The International Society for Criminology (ISC) was founded in Rome, Italy in 1937 and the first Congress was held from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> of October of 1938. In this century, congresses were held in Rio de Janeiro (2003), Philadelphia (2005), Barcelona (2008) and Kobe, Japan (2011). All were successful, heavily attended, and well covered by the media.

Given the true international participation in it, the 2014 Congress reminded all of us once more that the Society is the only worldwide organization in the field of criminology and criminal justice. Its objective is to support activities and research designed to produce a better understanding of and the best solutions available to the crime phenomenon on an international scale. The Society promotes the prevention of crime as well, along with improving the procedures used by the various criminal

justice systems. Its activities, therefore, focus both on scientific and practical issues. The World Congress of Criminology is an integral part of the life of the Society, the foremost criminology event that brings together the best academics, researchers, professionals and policy makers to discuss the most relevant and current issues related to crime and deviance and their prevention, within the framework of a full respect for human rights and democratic values.

### **Theme of the Congress**

The theme of the 2014 Congress was “Gangs, Trafficking and Insecurity: Empowering the Community.”

This way, the XVII Congress took into account some of the most serious and cogent problems facing our society these days.

The spread of gangs involved in various criminal activities and violence is a major concern for many countries, especially since it has become internationalized and is connected to various types of trafficking, violent crimes, and even terrorism.

Trafficking in people, animals, arms, legal and illegal drugs, and other goods is a major phenomenon of our times, facilitated, ironically, by technological and electronic innovations that have made travel, moving people around the globe, transferring funds internationally, and communicating instantaneously relatively easy, inexpensive, and difficult to detect.

Powerful and vast economic interests, the profit motive challenged by fierce competition, and the widespread consumerism of today, are among the driving forces behind human exploitation, indentured servitude, and even slavery.

Citizen Security, is a sensitive issue which worries people worldwide, especially in urban areas, and reverberates in many sectors of society, especially the political one. The issue has escalated in many parts of the world and has become the number one public concern in many countries. The amount of insecurity that many experience in their daily lives slows down and impairs human, social and economic development. One of the major aims of the Congress was to analyze the reality of citizen security in depth, to study successful experiences, to make practical recommendations for improvements and, most of all, to give the community a voice in the Congress. Finally, “empowering the community” meant to underline that the solution to the crime problem is not only or principally to be found in the decrees or laws issued by the government or in the

research and analysis of scholars but most of all, in the people and in their communal decision to “take back” their communities, to exercise control over their environment, and demand an input in the decision making affecting them.

Thus, the Monterrey Congress provided a platform for learning, debating and attempting to address these cogent challenges and serious problems affecting our world today from an international perspective.

### **Format of the Congress**

The Congress welcomed different forms of presentations, from the traditional “papers” to roundtables, author meets critics sessions, literary and artistic expressions, community meetings, posters, workshops and more.

The submission choices available for the 2014 meetings included:

- (1) Complete Thematic Panel,
- (2) Individual Paper Presentation,
- (3) Poster Presentation,
- (4) Roundtables
- (5) Author Meets Critics Session,
- (6) Workshops
- (7) Readings of poetry, literature, theatre, drama works, & audiovisuals
- (8) Community Meetings
- (9) Film Festival.

In designing the Congress, the idea was for it to be a dynamic, high energy, and creative event that offered high quality scholarly and research material, data, and insights along with more concrete, practical, solution-oriented debates and collaborations.

The community and non-governmental organizations in Monterrey and elsewhere were also invited to be present and active at the Congress, taking part in scholarly sessions and learning from top experts and scholars, engaging them in discussion, conversation and debate; sharing their own live and experiential knowledge of the reality of crime and violence; and striving to collaboratively formulate pragmatic policies for effective intervention and prevention.

Thus, Community meetings were very welcome at the Congress. The goal was to establish bridges between scholars, academics, researchers, policy makers, professionals in criminal justice and the community. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were invited to organize meetings

that involved the community and represented an effort to translate research and theory into action and to inspire more research, theory and intervention rooted, inspired, guided by the community's vision and needs. Examples are ex-prisoners discussing their prison experience and prison reform with correctional personnel; survivors of crimes of violence sharing their encounter with victimization, the system's (police, medical, judiciary etc.) response and the need for change; members of a community especially threatened by crime and insecurity dialoguing with academics, policy makers and police on what their needs are and how best to solve their challenges, etc. Community-based organizations were most welcome at the Congress which was open to events involving the community of Monterrey and beyond.

The Congress also especially welcomed youth, their enthusiasm, energy, creativity and innovation.

A considerable amount of thinking and effort went into creating the right atmosphere and offering a favorable environment to the participants so that, during those days of August 2014, they could live, work, and experience a unique event that they themselves created, sustained and nourished through their own efforts, sharing, listening to others, and understanding each other. It was the firm intention of the Program Chair, Prof. Emilio C. Viano, and of the Organizing Committee, that the Congress would not be a static occurrence, marking the passing of time since the preceding one, but a point of departure for the beginning of a major effort and a sustained campaign to make our world more just, safe and secure for all.

Consequently, the participants were invited to take part in this dynamic and exciting event the goal of which was to join together and mold intellectual insights, rigorous research findings, and streetwise understandings into an unbreakable commitment and a powerful movement to address crime and deviance in a sustained and resolute way, worldwide. One of the best and most promising aspects of the Congress, once it was held, was the high number of young people who participated with great enthusiasm and interest in the activities, sessions and programs of the Congress. Over 100 of them became members of the Society during the Congress.

### **The Program of the Congress**

The working sessions of the Congress were Monday, August 11; Tuesday August 12; and Wednesday, August 13. In the morning of each day

there were plenary sessions addressing one of the major themes of the Congress. At the inaugural session on August 11, Francisco Dall'Anese, former Attorney General of Costa Rica, Head of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, Judge of the Supreme Court of Costa Rica spoke on "The Vision, Policy and Capacity Needed to Effectively Combat Organized Crime, Drug Trafficking, and Impunity."

On August 12, the first general session was dedicated to Trafficking in Persons. Teresa Ulloa Zíaurriz, Director of the Regional Coalition against the Traffic of Women and Children in Latin America and the Caribbean (CATWLAC); Michele A. Clark of George Washington University, Washington DC; and Fernando Garcia-Robles, Anti-Trafficking in Persons, Organization of American States discussed the theme, with Emilio C. Viano, Program Chair of the Congress, chairing the session.

The following general session was on Citizens' Security in a Violent Time: The Evidence and the Concrete Proposals. Alfonso Verde Cuenca, President of the Citizens' Council on Security of Nuevo León chaired the session with Eunice Rendón Cardenas, Federal Under Secretary for Crime Prevention and Citizens' Participation; David Weisburd, George Mason University, Fairfax VA and Hebrew University, Jerusalem; and Mario Palma Rojo, National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics, Mexico City, as speakers.

On Wednesday, August 13, the first general session was on Gangs and Youth Violence: Innovative Approaches and Best Practices, with Antonio Anderson, a Catholic priest and a community leader in Nuevo Laredo, México, presiding. The speakers were Nora Frias Melgoza, Section on Development and Institutional Integration, National Commission on Security, Mexico City; José Miguel Cruz, Florida International University; Angela Higginson, University of Queensland, Australia; and Hugo Morales Córdova, Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

The next general session on August 13 focused on Violence Against Women and Family Violence. The moderator was Aixa Alvarado Gurany, Director of Orientation, Protection and Support for Victims of Crime and Witnesses, Center for Family Justice of Nuevo León, Monterrey NL. The presenters were Ambassador Carmen Moreno Toscano, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women, Organization of American States; Margarita Guille, Inter-American Network of Shelters and Centers for Women, Mexico City; and Deborah D. Tucker, National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, USA.

At the Congress there were 75 sessions; 225 presentations; and 15 posters in total. The program was definitely very rich, busy, exciting and informative.

While all sessions and workshops enriched the Congress, some sessions deserve to be especially highlighted.

On Monday, August 11, a group of Japanese physicians spoke on their comprehensive approach against child abuse; and a delegation of criminologists from the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú presented a thematic session on the “Analysis of illicit economies: Illicit drug trafficking and connected crimes in Perú.” Researchers, mostly from the National Institute of Penal Sciences of Mexico (INACIPE), shared their research findings on the theme of “City, Delinquency and Daily Life in Today’s Mexico.”

Another important session was organized and staffed by the office of the Attorney General of Colorado, USA on “Crimes Against Immigrants in the United States: Protecting Our Most Vulnerable Neighbors from Predatory Criminals: The Immigrant Protection Initiative of Colorado’s 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney’s Office.”

On Tuesday, August 12, a delegation of the Korean Institute of Criminology, led by its Director, Park Sang Ok, presented a special session on recent research on criminological themes in Korea. Another very interesting session was that on “The Value Chain of the Illicit Traffic of Cocaine in Perú: A Focused Analysis for Producing Countries in the Andes Region” by a group of researchers from the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

In the afternoon of August 12, a group of faculty and graduate students of the University of Yucatán in Merida shared the findings of their studies on sexual aggressors sentenced to prison. Their papers covered topics like the forensic psychological evaluation of the risk of violence among those sentenced to prison in Yucatán for sexual aggression; their psychological characteristics; the legal and psycho-social profile of sentenced sexual aggressors; and the different variables in sexual aggressors depending on whether or not they admit responsibility. A group of professors, researchers, and students from the University of Yucatán in Merida were very active in presenting their impressive work at the Congress in various other sessions and panels. Professor Reyna Faride Peña Castillo was instrumental in organizing this strong participation in and contributions to the Congress by faculty and students of the University of Yucatán.

On Wednesday, August 13, in the afternoon, the Inter-American Commission on Women of the Organization of American States organized a special session on “Women, Drug Policy and Incarceration.” Ambassador Carmen Moreno Toscano was one of the excellent presenters.

At the same time, another important and original session took place on “Mexican Youth Facing Violence: From Zero Tolerance to the Highest Trust.” This gathering was especially reserved to ex-gang members who came to share and discuss their experiences, their encounter with the justice system, their challenges and their rehabilitation. More than 200 attended from various regions of Mexico. This meeting was meant to provide a voice and a space for ex-gang members and those who work with them to stress the role of the community in finding solutions to crime problems. Experts and researchers on gangs were welcome as resource persons. This was a session by and for the ex-gang members and those directly working with them, stressing the theme of responsible citizenship. This was definitely a very special event. Importantly, one of the outcomes of the meeting was the creation of the first national network of programs and experts working with gang members, helping them leave gang life and re-insert themselves into society, a very delicate and quite dangerous mission.

A very successful film festival on criminology-related topics was also held during the Congress. Films were shown both at the site of the Congress and then also in a movie theater in the center of Monterrey to involve the community with the Congress. After the showing of each film, there was a discussion of the movie with the participation of experts in the subject matter and the public.

### **Exhibitors and Membership Drive**

During the Congress a number of publishers, universities, law enforcement agencies and other enterprises did exhibit their products, programs and services. There was great interest on the part of the participants. The International Society for Criminology also had a booth to promote the Society and membership in the Society. A reduced membership fee was offered to Congress participants valid only during the Congress. Over 100 new members joined the Society in Monterrey thanks to this initiative. Most of them were young criminologists which is very promising.

## Media Coverage

There was extensive media coverage of the Congress. In Mexico there were 74 press reports in major newspapers in the country; extensive television and cable reporting of various sessions of the Congress; and 53 televised interviews with presenters and participants at the Congress.

The inaugural session and the plenary sessions of the Congress were broadcast live on streaming media, accessible via internet worldwide.

The link to the videos of the inaugural and plenary sessions is

<http://eventos.uanl.mx/criminology2014/videos.php>

The link to still photographs taken during the Congress is

<http://eventos.uanl.mx/criminology2014/galeria.php>

## Governance of the Society

The governance of the Society was also addressed during the Congress.

The Scientific Commission met on August 11 and the Board of Directors met on August 12. The General Assembly of the Society took place on August 13. The Board elected Emilio C. Viano (USA) as President of the Society; Stephan Parmentier (Belgium) as General Secretary; Jianhong Liu (Macau) as President of the Scientific Commission; and Ichiro Tanioka (Japan), as Treasurer. The election was ratified by the General Assembly in the afternoon of August 13. This is the first time that colleagues from Asia are elected as officers of the Society, a historic achievement. Thus, the leadership of the Society has been diversified and internationalized.

The same has taken place with the Scientific Commission, which is now truly international with 32 countries represented on it. A sincere "Thank you!" to all those who have accepted to serve on these important governance bodies of the Society.

## Acknowledgments

A warm and sincere thanks to all those who gave their unstinting support to the XVII Congress and made it possible and very successful with a first notch program, a great organization, and 1,700 participants. In particular we want to acknowledge and thank the Governor of the State of Nuevo Leon, Rodrigo Medina de la Cruz; the Rector of the Autonomous



University of Nuevo Leon, Dr. Jesús Ancer Rodriguez and the University's Academic Secretary, Dr. Juan Manuel Alcocer Gonzalez; Dr. Alfonso Verde Cuenca, President of the Citizens' Council on Security of Nuevo Leon whose role was essential in bringing the Congress to Monterrey; José Carlos Hernandez and Diana Helena Rodriguez Infante of the International Relations office of the Governor of Nuevo León; and Yolanda De La Garza of the University of Nuevo León and her colleagues who played a key role in the actual organization of the Congress, and many more. A great thanks also goes to the members of the Society, of the Scientific Commission and of the Board who undertook the journey to be present and give their support to the Congress; to all the keynote and plenary sessions speakers and discussants; the presenters and those chairing the sessions; and the participants. It was a great honor for me, as the Program Chairperson of the Congress, to work with such distinguished and dedicated colleagues, professionals, and participants, especially the younger ones. Thank you!