

## **Thematic Discussions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration, 10-12 November 2021**

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Thematic session 3: Mainstreaming a gender perspective into crime prevention; addressing the needs and protect the rights of children and youth in crime prevention; and empowering youth for crime prevention

### **Panel intervention from civil society representative**

*Anna Alvazzi del Frate, Chair, Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*

I am honoured to speak in this panel on behalf of the entire NGO community. These topics are very dear to civil society, a wide sector working towards the promotion of transparency, raising awareness, delivering services. Among them there are key research and academic institutions bringing expert knowledge and experience to support the development of policies, as well as sound data for their monitoring and evaluation.

In a recent survey carried out by the Alliance among civil society organizations actively engaged in crime prevention programmes, more than two-thirds of the responding NGOs indicated that they prioritize issues related to gender and youth.

According to WHO, every year, about 1 billion children are affected by physical, sexual or psychological violence. Victimization of children includes not only injuries, disabilities and death, but also suffering from being exposed to violence in the family. In addition to the immediate and lifelong harmful consequences to individuals and families, violence against children undermines investments in health, education, and crime prevention. Victimization of children has proven to be a strong predictor of adult offending behaviour.

WHO also indicates that about 1 out of 3 of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Most of this violence is intimate partner violence and gender-based violence in the domestic sphere. Femicide, the gender-based killing of women, often occurs in protracted situations of gender-based violence, either domestic or within communal or group tensions and conflicts, violent environments in which women and girls may never experience safety.

The intersection between the COVID-19 pandemic, and its lockdown measures, and the existing spread of violence against women and children, has exposed pre-existing gaps and shortcomings in the overall ability of governments to prevent these forms of violence. The severity and frequency of violence against women and children have increased during the pandemic, pushed by stay-at-home measures which placed an extra stress on critical situations of domestic violence. As indicated in the UNODC COVID-19 Policy Documents, these situations represented emergencies within the emergency, with the increase of physical and psychological violence against women and children. Furthermore, COVID-19-related deaths of parents and caregivers affected children often facing adverse consequences, including poverty, abuse, and institutionalization.

Many countries were unprepared to manage multiple crises simultaneously:

The convergence of risks, which also include the economic crisis subsequent to COVID-19, and climate change-related emergencies) created further threats for the safety of fragile communities and families.

Measures to combat COVID-19 have included the redirection of resources towards scaling down services considered non-essential. In many cases this unfortunately resulted in gender-blind initiatives which did not prioritize measures to combat gender-based violence against women as essential.

We welcome the recommendations [and the good examples we have heard today] for gender mainstreaming in COVID-19 response plans and budgeting of resources, for example by including women and women's organizations in COVID-19 response planning and decision-making.

Civil society and their activities prioritizing support and assistance to women and children in need play a crucial role, contributing to documenting the extent and scope of gender-based violence and violence against children, adding the necessary level of granularity to the information at the basis of new legislation and policies. During the current crisis, however, many NGOs and women's groups have lost funding. Furthermore, NGOs have been forced to adapt to new ways of working, including by working remotely, thus reducing their ability to outreach and interact with all relevant stakeholders.

Finally, to close on a positive note, we note that many NGOs among our members are youth-led, characterized by enthusiasm, aiming at empowering youth. Many are engaged in activities promoting youth resilience, supporting young people in accessing decent work, initiatives for youth at risk, such as social works and educational programmes for sensitising youth against drugs and the risks of getting involved with gangs.

Mr Chairman, we are grateful for the opportunity to address the Commission in this new format of the Thematic Discussion, on these matters, which have been emphasized by member States in the Kyoto Declaration, and look forward to working with them to find solutions and advance in effective prevention and responses. Close cooperation between governments and NGOs, nationally and internationally, is key for developing sound policies and achieving strategic goals.

Thank you.