

Conclusion: The Way Forward

PAUL TAYLOR, UN URBAN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

It was no coincidence that the Urban Safety - Safety for All conference was held in South Africa, a country now seen as an important leader in the developing world. The attendance of those from both the North and the South shows how much there is to learn from each other. Countries may have differences in economic levels, but there seems to be little difference in imagination and innovation. This meeting was not just to exchange ideas, but also served to set benchmarks and move the crime prevention agenda forward.

There can be no doubt about the key role that cities have in crime prevention, but for cities to be effective, it is no longer enough to go about their business in the same old way. They have to go out and actively engage with the public to identify priorities. It is no longer just 'participation' - it is 'partnership' that will make the crucial difference.

Listening and responding to the public are new ways of doing business. This process gets to the top of what safer cities is about - rebuilding civic capital - the shared values within which our cities could function and where security could exist. Only with all the actors working together on the basis of equal respect can shared values and shared communication be reinstated.

Where do we go from here? The United Nations is rethinking and reforming itself. One of its key comparative advantages is its ability to assist in shaping the international agenda, by encouraging people to think and by distilling concerns from comments. The UN can also help to bring about consensus and then spread the message in terms of new norms, standards and principles of behaviour. Through collaboration with others, from governments to communities, there is a way for us to move forward and make our cities, countries and world safer.

AZHAR CACHALIA, SECRETARY FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY, SOUTH AFRICA

When I spoke on the first day of this conference, I talked of the road to Johannesburg and made reference to the length of the journey. The direction of the road now seems much clearer. It is also clear that this conference represents no more than a significant milestone - that we are engaged in a process - and that we share a vision of our ultimate

destination.

The debates have been good but, surprisingly perhaps, there has been little disagreement about key issues. We are talking more and more of a common vision of a safe society with agreement on how this can be achieved.

In this respect, the debates that occurred, are no longer defined by whether we speak from a perspective of East or West, or North versus South. In South Africa, in particular, this has important implications for the emerging debate on how local government gets involved in crime prevention.

When we talk of crime and crime prevention, inequalities prevail, even in developed countries. Issues of scarce resources, of the need to address the root causes of crime, of the impact of poverty on crime, of the understanding of the need for inclusive partnerships, direct us from isolation to integration.

At Vancouver, concerns were about:

- developing tools for crime prevention;
- increasing national support for the implementation of crime prevention initiatives; and
- extending the debate to grapple with issues specific to developing countries.

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hope to our shared vision.

We have demonstrated a clear understanding of the common themes and our commitment today must be to pursue the challenge of implementation rigorously, each of us critically aware of our differing environments, the realities of individual infrastructures and the variety of needs of local communities. Only then will we be able to add the essential ingredient of

We have heard the beginning of people sharing their projects. The value of this is inextricably tied to accountability aimed at making policies implementable, based on an understanding of local problems.

If this general agreement around common themes has formed the backdrop to the conference, a number of more detailed debates have given it its texture and value. Crime prevention and the provision of safety is a public good. This conference has put the issue of crime prevention on the local government agenda in South Africa and, to some extent, the process of innovation begins here.

A number of other points need to be noted:

- While the focus of this conference has been on the urban habitat, the link between the quality of life of citizens in rural and urban areas is inextricable.
- Poverty impacts at a basic and encompassing level - on human rights, equality and accessibility to justice for all - and threatens the very concept of democracy.
- Critical to this - as a stepping stone in development and a key to crime prevention - is the effective execution by local government of its core functions.
- If longer term safety and security are to be achieved, we must encourage, among others, the proper design of appropriate living environments where fundamental issues of safety are taken into account - this includes, once more, addressing inequalities and issues of poverty.
- Safer societies are essential for the development and strengthening of democracy, particularly at local level.

Key to the conference is the change from principle to practice. Action brings hope - and there is no better method of learning than learning by doing. This means:

- We need to ensure the development of a culture of innovation and experimentation to test 'promising practices' in the context of the developing world.
- These need to be sustainable. Critical in this regard is the need for wider scale investment to expand small projects and thereby spread an inclusive culture of crime prevention.
- We must be alert to simple solutions. We need to be taking small steps in the right direction, within our available capacity. Both problems and solutions are often universal and must be matched with a global vision that leads us to safer societies.
- In this regard, the conference has been crucial in drawing us closer to agreement on what is possible, and providing access to information. The focus on the collection and provision of information also reminds us to access those most closely affected by crime - giving resonance to the voices of those not often heard.

The need for a collaborative partnership approach is underpinned by a number of principles. The focus of crime prevention must be local, based on an understanding of the problems in any area and how they can be confronted. However, this does not mean an abdication of national or provincial governments' roles. These levels of government must provide:

- guidelines for crime prevention;

- space for innovation;
- adequate systems for evaluation;
- access to promising practices; and
- support for implementation.

This new security contract represents a shared responsibility for all levels of government and civil society. To this end, successful crime prevention partnerships will be dependent upon dialogue with local communities about what approach is required and will predicate real local action. It is only within this framework that the ability to implement policies will match both development aims and capacity.

Scarcity of resources highlights the need for a collaborative approach. The conference has underlined the value of combining community and professional skills. Further benefits of this approach include greater accountability and transparency that will limit corruption.

Central to discussions at the conference has been the need to break the cycles of crime and violence, with the fear of crime playing as important a role as crime itself. We cannot be driven by perceptions, but must confront and deal with the realities of the impact of the high levels of crime and violence in our cities, particularly on the victims of crime.

Victim empowerment has been a resonant theme of this conference, not only in terms of entrenching human rights, but also as a contribution to crime prevention. We understand that providing effective services to victims is a less costly approach than allowing the cycle to progress to a point of repeat victimisation – or even to where a victim becomes an offender.

The many common themes of the conference give us a sense of solidarity and shared purpose. But let us not forget the basics:

- Action must be based on an understanding of local environments. The way we access and use information is critical to successful implementation.
- The focus should be on simplicity and targeted intervention.
- Monitoring and evaluation should happen at all levels. It should be concerned with two questions: Does the initiative make a difference?; and Does it inform good practices for crime prevention beyond the target area?

We have learned much from what has happened here, but there is one important lesson that we have learned from what has not happened.

We need to involve and include the youth when we meet again to take