

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Mainstreaming holistic approaches to youth crime prevention

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Position: Deputy President

Dear Delegates,

My name is Maria Darivaki and I am honoured to serve as a Deputy President in the ECOSOC committee. Overall, I have attended seven MUNs and I strongly believe that the MUN is an innovative way for one to enrich their knowledge on global issues and learn how to cooperate with people of different social, religious and ethnical backgrounds.

Specifically, in the Economic and Social Council you will be able to explore issues that are present in everyday life. In fact, this particular topic deals with the youth and I believe you can relate to it. Thus, I am sure you will be able to come up with adequate solutions and contribute productively to our committee.

As your Deputy President, I advise you to read the study guide carefully and conduct your own research on the topic so as to familiarize yourselves with the issue. Additionally, make sure that you are aware of your nation's position on the matter and whether it has implied any measures to address the problem. For further reading you can use the sources listed on the bibliography. If you have any questions, I am available at this email address, [http://mdarivaki@campion.edu.gr](mailto:mdarivaki@campion.edu.gr).

Looking forward to the Conference.

Best Regards,
Maria Darivaki

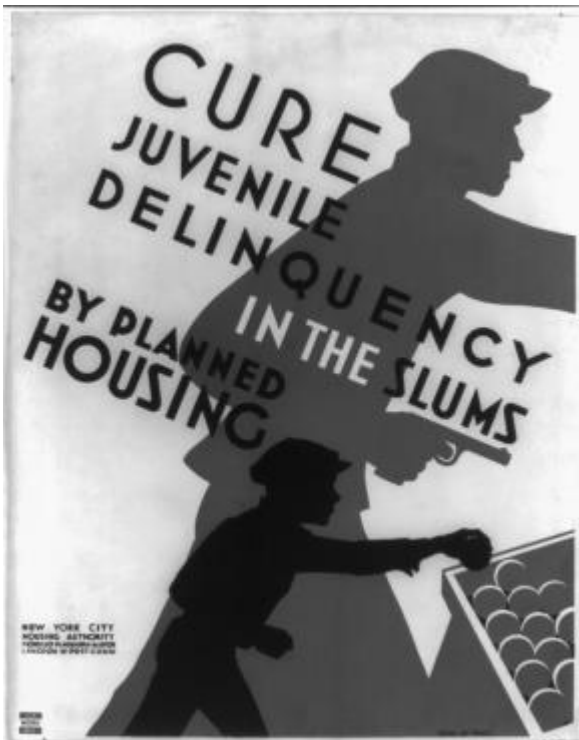
TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is evident that youth crime and delinquent behaviour amongst adolescents and young adults, has increased exponentially and has caused a number of different problems in our society. To be more precise, the transition from childhood to adulthood, which is a challenging psychological process, seems to trouble young people who are unable to keep up with both their individual development and the constant changes that take place in our modern world. This has resulted into a massive turbulence amongst the young who often indulge in violence or illegal practices to deal with the pressure that is put on them.

The most common criminal acts committed by the young include violent crimes, sex offences, use of illegal substances and property crimes. Moreover, when we refer to youth crime we also refer to the population of young people that has been victimized by various offenses. According

to the World Health Organization homicide is the fourth cause of death for young people at ages 10-29 years while one study reports that up to 24% of women share that their first sexual experience was forced¹.

Whether violence is committed by or against the youth, the consequences of this phenomenon are destructive to the social structure of nations. Moreover, young individuals who engage in criminal activities are more likely to become unemployed and develop idle behaviour. In addition, the healthcare system of a country suffers. It has to provide valuable human capital such as police officers, criminologists and social workers for the victims of juvenile violence. Thus, it is essential that countries implement measures to combat youth crime and provide a safe environment so the young can flourish in it.



1936 poster promoting planned housing as a method to deter juvenile delinquency²

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Youth

The transitional period from childhood to adulthood. The UN considers “youth” the people between the ages of 15 to 24 years. This happens for statistical purposes as the definition of “youth” differs from country to country³.

¹ “Youth violence”. World Health Organization. World Health Organization. September 07,2017

² “Juvenile delinquency”. Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. September 04, 2017. Septmeber 07,2017. < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juvenile_delinquency>

³ “Definition of Youth”. UN. Septembre 07,2017. < <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>>

Juvenile Delinquency

A violation of the law conducted by a juvenile⁴

Sexual offence

Crimes including rape, sexual assault and other offences such as prostitution, extreme pornography and the possession and distribution of indecent images⁵.

Property Crime

Criminal act that targets on obtaining or destructing property. For instance, burglary, theft, vandalism and shoplifting⁶

Violent Crime

Crime that involves intentional harm inflicted against an individual. Murder, assault and rape are considered violent crimes. Blackmail belongs to this category as well⁷.

Vandalism

The act of deliberately destructing private or public property⁸.

Hooliganism

Violent and unlawful behaviour usually conducted by young individuals⁹.

Gang

A group of people that engages in illegal and often disruptive activities¹⁰.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Causes

Youth crime can be caused by social, economic or cultural factors. The UN estimates that political instability and the enfeeblement of important institutions such as the government, can lead to an increase in youth crime. Additionally, marginalization can have a negative impact on the

⁴ "Juvenile Delinquency". Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. September 07, 2017 < <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/juvenile%20delinquency> >

⁵ "Sexual Offences". The Crown Prosecution Service. September 07, 2017 < http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/fact_sheets/sexual_offences/ >

⁶ "Property Crimes". Findlaw. September 07, 2017 < <http://www.easybib.com/cite/eval?url=http%3A%2F%2Fcriminal.findlaw.com%2Fcriminal-charges%2Fproperty-crimes.html> >

⁷ "Violent Crimes". Justia. September 07, 2017 < <https://www.justia.com/criminal/offenses/violent-crimes/> >

⁸ "Vandalism". Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. September 07, 2017. < <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vandalism> >

⁹ "Hooliganism". Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. September 07, 2017. < <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hooliganism> >

¹⁰ "Gang". Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. September 07, 2017. < <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gang> >

youth's psychology and lead to antisocial behaviour. Young people who are regarded as outcasts in their society are more likely join gangs who commit crimes, in order to feel accepted.

Furthermore, it is true that economic recessions contribute to the increase of juvenile delinquency. According to the World Economic Forum, recessions increase youth unemployment and therefore young people are more likely to engage in illegal activities¹¹. To continue, poverty is considered one of the main causes of youth crime as young people are forced to adopt a violent and unlawful behaviour in order to survive under wretched conditions. The Australian Institute of Criminology reports that economic disadvantage is one of the main reasons for delinquency amongst young people¹². Furthermore, illiteracy seems to be fuelling the problem. The lack of education may not be the primary cause of youth crime but it can trigger delinquent and antisocial behaviour. Statistics from Canada have shown that 79 out of 100 people entering penal facilities in the country do not own a high school diploma.

Finally, our modern culture seems to play a major role in the increase of youth crime. In particular, pop culture and its manifestation through the media seems to influence young individuals. Video games and news reports are constantly projecting images of violence to the youth, while at the same time social media such as Instagram and Tumblr are romanticizing illegal activities such as drug use and weapon possession. In 2011 a survey conducted in the USA showed that kids who use social media are twice as likely to use marijuana than kids who don't. Nevertheless, youth crime should be seen as a social problem rather than a cultural one as it mainly has to deal with socioeconomic inequality.

Other factors

In order to fully address the issue, we would have to look at other factors that contribute to the problem and unfortunately, they cannot be easily controlled by the government of a country. To be more specific, the UN reports that dysfunctional families and bad parenting techniques such as abuse as a discipline tool, frequent migration of the family and little supervision of children can push young people towards crime. The absence of a parent can also cause issues in the family structure. Nevertheless, the above factors cannot be easily monitored by the government. Instead, the government should take measures to combat child abuse and provide a settler for children and adolescents whose parents violate the law (e.g. substance abuse, property violation) and thus they are unsuitable as guardians.

Gangsterism

It was previously mentioned that gangs are groups of people that conduct illegal and disruptive activities. Before we analyse how the involvement of the youth in such groups increases youth violence, it is essential that we look into other characteristics of gangs. Precisely, gangs are discernible groups and they usually have an identifying structural feature. Additionally, they identify with a territory and they antagonize with other similar gangs. Young people and especially teenagers may join these groups because of peer pressure or because they feel unsafe and they need someone to take them "under their wing". Generally, authorities find it difficult to break up a gang especially because there is feeling of loyalty and trust between them. Gangs can damage both the

¹¹ Bell Brian. "Do recessions increase crime?". World Economic Forum. September 07,2017
<<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/03/do-recessions-increase-crime/>>

¹² Shying Olivia, "Youth crime is a social problem". The Courier. May 15, 2016. September 07, 2017
<<http://www.thecourier.com.au/story/3905436/youth-crime-is-a-social-problem/>>

psychological and the physical health of a child or teenager. Even worse, gangs are considered responsible for trafficking crimes, meaning that this sort of violence can influence other young people beyond the gang. Sex trafficking seems to be the main crime of gangs and in the past, the US government had prosecuted 200 gangs that were associated with sex trafficking. Countries like the US, Colombia, Mexico, UK and Italy are known for their gangsterism problem.

Consequences

Youth crime has a negative impact for both the individual involved and the society. Children and adolescents who conduct crimes are more likely to drop out of school and become unemployed in the long term. Moreover, young criminals suffer from alcohol or/and drug abuse and they may even become parents at a young age.

To continue, we have to stress the impact of youth crime in the society. First and foremost, youth crime and violence victimizes other individuals and thus causes distress and destruction to other people's lives. Additionally, communities where gangsterism is present suffer from vandalism, gun violence, drug and sex trafficking or even homicide. In terms of economics, society suffers as it has to cover the health care costs of the victims and other costs resulting from vandalism and hooliganism. To continue, governments that suffer from high youth crime have to provide appropriate staff to deal with the issue and thus use valuable human capital for a matter that is evitable.

Most importantly, increased criminal activity causes fear and a feeling of insecurity amongst citizens and reinforces the marginalization of young people involved in crime. In such manner, it is hard for nations to help individuals whose community does not accept them. Thus, social disparity amongst classes is facilitated and the development of the community is at risk.

COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

World Health Organization

The WHO is an organization established by the UN in 1948 to deal with health-related issues around the world and promote healthy lifestyles. In the same context, the WHO has taken certain measures to reduce youth crime and create a safer environment for young people. Therefore, the WHO provides data collection and research on the issue and advocates against youth violence and crime through campaign materials. In fact, WHO acts as the Secretariat of Violence Prevention Alliance which has as an important focus on youth violence and its prevention.

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The UNODC is a merger of the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention and its objective is to assist Member States to combat crime, terrorism and drug trafficking. To combat the issue of youth crime UNODC has launched a programme to prevent youth crime through sports. The programme was applied in 2017 in Brazil where UNODC cooperated with the government in order to identify target groups of young people who are in need of help. The programme provides professionals such as coaches and social workers to arrange sporting settings with young people and discourage them from engaging in criminal activity.



UNODOC Sports Programme¹³

United States of America

USA is one of the main countries battling youth crime as delinquency amongst young people is a common problem and gangsterism is at rise. It is estimated that almost one in three American teenagers and young adults has been arrested by the age of 23. Moreover, since gun possession is legal in the US and it is fairly easy to get a gun license, gun violence is frequently conducted by young people. To continue, the multi-ethnic nature of the nation has created conflict amongst different racial groups and therefore gangsterism has become a major issue in the country. Most importantly, in the US we come across an extremely severe case of youth crime, known as a “school shooting”. These massacres are usually products of troubled teenagers who indulge in violence to deal with their own personal issues. These teenagers are usually victims of bullying or domestic abuse. Since 2013, USA has suffered more than 200 school shootings¹⁴.

Caribbean Countries

Recently, there has been an increase in youth crime in the Caribbean Countries which has prompted a UNICEF research in the area. The research reported that in the islands of Barbados, St. Lucia and Dominica a significant amount of aggressive and violent behaviour is present. Specifically, in St. Lucia there are gangs who are correlated with drug trafficking and it seems that the girls in the country are starting to commit similar crimes to the ones of their male counterparts. In Barbados, the juveniles that conduct offences rarely come in contact with the juvenile justice system while in Dominica the young people involved in criminal activities are usually not caught. To tackle the issue, local organizations such as the Centre for Adolescent Renewal and Education (CARE) take action.

Nigeria

In general, Africa has one of the most youthful populations in the world and consequently Nigeria has a large population of young people who are unemployed and they are unable to find a position in the workforce. In this way, they are forced to turn to criminal activities to survive. To

¹³ “Using the power of sports to prevent youth crime and drug use”.UNODOC. 07 September,2017. < <https://www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/news/2016/12/using-the-power-of-sports-to-prevent-youth-crime-and-drug-use.html>>

¹⁴ “The long, shameful list of school shootings in America”. EverytownResearch.org. August 17, 2017.September 07,2017 < <https://everytownresearch.org/school-shootings/>>

address the issue, Nigeria has attempted to modernize its juvenile justice system according to the guidelines of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mexico

According to the World Bank Organization in 2010 half of the crimes in the country were committed by the youth¹⁵. Poverty and the lack of education can be considered responsible for youth violence in Mexico but a recent report, again submitted by the World Bank, suggests that youth unemployment has created this violence and the overwhelming number of homicides. To resolve the matter the Mexican government cooperates with the World Bank.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1948	Child Protection Act in the UK established a children’s committee and children’s officer in each local authority
1959	The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child
1985	Beijing Rules / United Nations set minimum rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice
1992	ECOSOC resolution establishes the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
1995	UN Treaty on Children’s Rights discussed juvenile justice
1997	ECOSOC recommended guidelines for Actions on Children in the Criminal Justice System
2005	USA rules out capital punishment for juveniles
2016	UN resolution on “Mainstreaming Holistic Approaches to Youth Crime”

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- Beijing Rules In 1985 the UN drafted a resolution to set rules for juvenile justice systems around the world. The resolution discusses the treatment of juvenile offenders and calls for the incorporation of children’s rights in juvenile law¹⁶.
- 2016 UN Resolution on “Mainstreaming Holistic Approaches to Youth Crime” discusses measures that the Member States can imply to combat youth crime and proposes that various UN agencies, such as UNODC, assist the nations in preventing juvenile delinquency¹⁷.

¹⁵ Mexican Youth: Authors and Victims of Violence. World Bank. September 07,2017. <
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/03/05/mexican-youth-authors-and-victims-of-violence>>

¹⁶ The Beijing Rules/ 40/33 of 29 November 1985 <
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/beijingrules.pdf>>

¹⁷ UN Resolution 2016 <
https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ_Sessions/CCPCJ_25/2016_Resolutions_Decisions/02.ECOSOC_2016/Draft_resolution_II_ECOSOC.pdf>

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

In 2014 the World Bank organization organized a Conference calling for cooperation between the World Bank and the Americas to prevent juvenile crime in the region¹⁸ As it was previously mentioned UN agencies such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime have taken initiatives to eradicate the problem through various campaigns and programmes. Member States usually have NGOs that target juvenile delinquency and take measures to fight against it.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Possible Solutions In order to prevent youth crime member states would have to ensure that young people are raised in a protective and safe environment. For the youth that is already involved in criminal activities, governments should provide correctional programmes designed with respect to Children's Rights. To be more specific, here are some suggestions:

Member states should:

1. Conduct researches, and provide data and statistics relating to youth crime
2. Organize campaigns to spread awareness on the issue
3. Educate the parents through the media, and leaflet distribution, on how to prevent their kids' participation in criminal acts
4. Provide professional services, such as social workers and psychologists to deal with troubled adolescents and children who have demonstrated signs of aggressive and delinquent behaviour
5. Provide training at schools for teachers so as to inform them on how to deal with students that show delinquent behaviour
6. Ensure that their juvenile justice system is in accordance with Children's Rights
7. Provide policing staff to deal with unsuitable parents
8. Spread awareness on domestic violence
9. Provide Rehabilitation programmes for kids involved in gangsterism

The UN should:

1. Provide technical and financial assistance to Member States to assist them in carrying out their policies against youth crime
2. Encourage the cooperation of Member States in order to eradicate the problem
3. Launch educational programmes for young people who live in poverty
4. Launch programmes that provide activities of civilizing nature

¹⁸ "Together for Action: Partnerships for Youth Crime and Violence Prevention in the Americas». World Bank. 07 September, 2017

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