

CCPCJ THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KYOTO DECLARATION

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Short Presentation by Taro Morinaga, Director, UNAFEI, on Day 1, 10 November 2021 (online)

- Addressing the causes, including the root causes, of crime
- Evidence-based crime prevention
- Tailor-made crime prevention strategies

Honourable Chair,

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity. Indeed, it's a great honour and pleasure for me and UNAFEI.

I'd like to give you, just for your reference and as a small repayment for the information our fellow members always kindly provide us, a very brief overview on Japan's crime trends and what Japan has done to cope with them.

Japan may be one of the countries with a relatively low crime rate, but of course it is not a crime-free society. The number of reported crimes, which had stayed stable in the past several decades showed a considerable increase, reaching the peak at the beginning of this century. This was of course an alarming situation for the nation and the government. By then, there had been measures taken in some specific areas such as suppression of gang-related activities or domestic violence, but the rapidly rising volume of criminal activities prompted the government to set up a more comprehensive crime prevention policy. In 2003, the government set up the Ministerial Commission on Crime Control and laid down an overall strategy for combating crimes. This action plan had a wide range of targets which called for involvement of almost all ministries, and the government even increased the number of public officials handling public security issues. What may be noteworthy is that the action plan called for more involvement of the civil society.

However, it soon turned out to be that a general policy was not enough. Although the action plan surely had positive effects to some extent, which resulted in the decrease of numbers of criminal incidents, another problem came to light right after the launching of it. It was the issue of recidivism. In 2004 and 2005, a series of brutal and heinous crimes committed by ex-prisoners horrified the society, and in 2006, the number of reoffenders picked up by the law enforcement reached a record high in history. A study conducted by the Research and Training Institute of the

Ministry of Justice revealed that reoffenders – who amount to 30 percent of all offenders – did actually commit 60 per cent of all cleared offences, which was quite alarming data. In addition, in contrast to the decline of the overall crime rate of the younger generation, the society observed a considerable increase of offences, most of them being repeated theft, committed by elderly people. And drug offences had not shown any decline either.

In response to that, the crime prevention strategy of Japan shifted its focus to how to minimize reoffending. As you see in the slide, policies and strategies targeting reoffending were issued one after the other. Eventually, all these plans and efforts were streamlined and systematized under the 2016 Act for the Prevention of Recidivism and the 2017 Recidivism Prevention Plan which, as you see, is not only quite ambitious, but unique in that it identifies baseline data and sets forth concrete indicators and goals. Next year, when there is an overall evaluation of this Plan, we will be able to see what has been achieved.

Now, setting up all these plans and strategies and implementing them would not have been possible without continuous collection and storage of accurate data and statistics, and thorough analysis of them. Japan has been quite diligent in such works and is also equipped with skills and measures. In contrast to that, many developing countries with which UNAFEI works together are not necessarily blessed with sufficient skills and resources regarding this matter which are of paramount importance when trying to implement evidence-based crime prevention strategies. I'd like to draw your attention to this issue, and it is my hope that the UN and other donors who engage in technical cooperation with developing countries will take into consideration the rendering of assistance in the area of crime statistics and criminological analysis in addition to their cooperation activities which are currently ongoing.

Thank you for your attention.