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Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the organizers for having given to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) the opportunity to be here to address the XVth International Congress of Social Defence.

The strengthening and the promotion of the rule of law lies at the very heart of the mandate of UNODC. The Office promotes efforts to combat crime, terrorism and illicit drug including transnational organized crime, corruption and trafficking in drugs and human beings. One of our core mandates is reform of criminal justice system and UNODC provides assistance to developing countries at both an operational and normative level.

For countries emerging from a conflict, re-establishing rule of law and justice systems are essential. Strengthening rule of law in the wake of conflict is not only an investment for the recovery of the country but, by addressing the grave injustices of war and the root causes of conflict, can help in preventing a return to the hostilities in the future. In addition, post-conflict and transitional societies have greater vulnerability to serious ordinary crimes, such as transnational organized crime, trafficking in human beings, and most importantly, corruption.

Over the years, UNODC has provided legislative assistance, and training for judges and prosecutors and assistance in justice system reform including prison reform, to countries emerging from conflict, such as Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, El Salvador, Cambodia, Haiti, Liberia, DRC, Somalia, Former Yugoslavia, and Iraq. UNODC has also provided training for civilian police component of UN peace-keeping operations and has published various manuals and tools for them.

It can be said, that, in terms of conflict related crimes, while ICC and other international criminal courts are dealing with top criminals, UNODC plays a complementary role by helping local governments to deal with their followers as well as other criminals who are exploiting fragile society, through fair and effective criminal justice system, which, in longer term would pave a way to establish a robust society based on rule of law.