



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**MINISTRY OF ICT, INNOVATION AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR YOUTH**

**REMARKS BY MS. NADIA AHMED ABDALLA DURING THE
INTERACTIVE LAB SESSION ON PREVENTION OF CRIME AMONG
YOUTH THROUGH LEVERAGING ON SUSTAINABLE
ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2020**

**Regional Representative, Regional Office for Eastern Africa of the
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - Mr. Amado De Andres,
Gen-Unlimited Kenya Secretariat Co-Chair - Ms. Ruth Kaggia
UN Resident Coordinator - Mr. Siddharth Chatterjee,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today to discuss a major policy concern. The increased incidence of crime is a major socio-economic policy concern as high levels of crime hinder prosperity of a country.

Kenya's security landscape is characterized by various conflict drivers such as poverty, youth unemployment, high poverty levels, idleness and disillusionment occasioned by increased unemployment rates and underemployment, peer pressure and use of drugs and substances of abuse contribute to crime among the youth just to mention a few.

This is linked to the growing number of youth who are taking to crime, and those left vulnerable to becoming the targets and recruits of organized terrorist networks, militia groups and criminality. Young people have been accused of being the perpetrators of in crime. They are likely to be caught up in a poverty trap or potentially become a destabilizing force that can be used to cause civil disturbance or become a recruitment pool for terrorism, negative political mobilization and other criminal activities. Around the world today, we know that poverty, a lack of opportunity and displacement have push some over 50 million young people towards a more dangerous and unfortunate means of earning a living.

Youth unemployment, underemployment and inactivity are major obstacles to sustainable development. Unemployment entails social exclusion, and is thus one of the social drivers of youth underutilization and has potential of driving youth criminal activities. Formal public and private sectors have not been growing substantially to create adequate jobs for the mass of unemployed youth. Youth also lack assets that would act as collateral in accessing loans and other forms of credit. Employment creation for the youth is therefore government priority. It is clear that challenges such as socio-economic inequalities, social exclusion and unemployment, besides being risk factors for crime and corruption, prevent youth from reaching their full potential.

In addition, countries around the world are grappling with the many harmful effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including health and socio-economic impacts. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the disruptions the pandemic has caused, and many are now at risk of being left behind in education, economic opportunities, and health and well-being during a crucial stage of their life development. Many of the hardships faced during the COVID-19 crisis are also known risk factors associated with crime, violence and drug use, and may expose youth to increased victimization and involvement with crime during and after the pandemic.

Preparing today's youth to become leaders rests in large part on giving them solid educational pillars, including not only the necessary range of formal academics but also strong ethical foundations and essential life skills. Many of these aspirations are contained in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and are entrenched in Member States' national curricula as they strive to empower youth, with rule of law and a culture of lawfulness becoming increasingly fundamental factors. In supporting the Government's security processes of promoting a crime free, secure, peaceful and cohesive country, as a Ministry, our key priority intervention areas include: Supporting youth development, health and wellbeing;

Building capacity of the youth education, training and skills development; Entrenching positive morals, values, patriotism and volunteerism for transformative leadership. We take measures that address youth unemployment, underemployment and inactivity through Affirmative Action programmes to ensure that the youth access relevant education and training; have opportunities to associate, are represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life; have access to employment; and are protected from harmful retrogressive practices and exploitation. We prioritize youth policies and interventions that are consistent with the country's development priorities, the Constitution, international conventions and the global trends relating to the youth agenda where no young Kenyan is left behind.

In an our endeavour as the Ministry charged with the youth mandate, we are obligated to undertake deliberate and systematic efforts necessary to appropriately equip and empower youth to attain and realize their full potential and in turn drive the attainment of Kenya's development objectives as well as international commitments which among others, include the African Union Agenda (2063). The Ministry has a direct role to play by ensuring that sustainable policies and strategies are developed and implemented to address these challenges among the youth through approaches that provide sustainable livelihood programmes for youth and provide a counter narrative to crime and provide long-term solutions and interventions.

We have taken to implement interventions that utilize both formal and non-formal education, training and skills development channels and mutually reinforce and enhance youth educational progress and attainment. It is vital that we build skilled, competent and disciplined youth workforce therefore, the youth population dividend can be harnessed through provision of relevant skills, and competencies, which are consistent and aligned with job market requirements. It is therefore important to provide Competency Based Education and Training and enhancing training in other skills including information technology as well as imparting life and communication skills. We endeavour to increase opportunities for education, employment and political participation among youth.

This gives the youth more life opportunities thus reducing their vulnerability to crime. It is critical that we create opportunities for youth to earn decent, positive and sustainable livelihoods. In efforts to enhance employment, entrepreneurship and creativity we promote and implement capacity building programmes that target skills development, entrepreneurship as well as programmes that expand internships, mentorships, attachments apprenticeship and business incubation among youth. The youth constitute a huge pool of untapped talent potential including in sports and performing arts. This creativity potential of the youth could be tapped and nurtured to create alternative pathways of earning a living.

To effectively achieve this objective, we work with multi-agency groups to engage youth in promoting secure crime free neighborhoods and communities including other National Government Ministries and County governments, development partners, private sector, NGOs, FBOs and other youth stakeholders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In preventing and dealing with crime, key social problems must be addressed first in order to create a situation where targeted interventions can be fruitful. We need to prioritize policies and practice that seek to change structural inequalities rather than individual behaviour.

At the broadest level, this means addressing key social problems such as poverty, unemployment, restricted opportunities for training and education that frequently underpin and exacerbate crime. In order to achieve a sustainable livelihood situation, youth must receive support that leads to increased income and well-being. In that connection, wide-ranging sustainable livelihood services are crucial to the success of interventions targeting marginalized populations vulnerable to crime. As has been demonstrated, the adoption of sustainable livelihood approaches could make an important contribution to the long-term success of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation interventions in efforts to prevent crime.

Prevention or rehabilitation programmes must include a sustainable livelihood component as well as include services that render youth more self-reliant and make their lives more sustainable. Sustainable livelihood interventions need to accompany prevention interventions, opening the way for preventive activities that strengthen protective factors and weaken risk factors in a range of settings, including the family, school, the workplace and the community and providing young people with the information, skills and opportunities for healthy development.

Development of strong partnerships with relevant organizations is crucial. Cooperation with other organizations needs to be strengthened, and awareness raised in order to understand the importance of incorporating sustainable livelihood approaches specifically focusing on education and human and social development. Partnerships could add value to the components of education and vocational training, especially for youth and the concept of sustainable livelihoods and its inclusion in development initiatives involving crime could be effectively addressed.

In achieving our collective goal of building a better tomorrow, it is imperative that we work together in addressing the issue of building a culture of lawfulness and strengthening youth resilience to crime and violence in local communities. This means working with ministries of education, academic institutions, educators, sports coaches, youth and children worldwide to support the next generation to change society for the better by fostering socially responsible global citizens with a sound moral and ethical compass who are prepared to tackle the serious crime problems. As I conclude, I take this opportunity to urge organizations to implement comprehensive alternative livelihood programmes by integrating mental health and well-being support programmes in through provision of tailor made interventions that will reduce if not eliminate mental health risks.

May I remind us that youth too have an important role in development and ensuring safe communities but we must include them in decision making. If we want to reduce crime, it is crucial to not only address the needs of young people in crime prevention and criminal justice, but also to engage them in the design and implementation of prevention policies and programmes that use different approaches to engage at-risk young people and promotes life skills and enhances their awareness about the risks associated with crime, violence and drug use. Bringing together multiple ideas and suggestions will help in feeding into the country's national youth approach in tackling crime.

As I conclude, I wish to extend a note of appreciation to UNODC for organizing this Session. It could not have come at a better time. As is our core belief at the Ministry, young people can transform the society as actors in achievement of sustainable development. This is why we endeavor to establish pathways to tackle the many specific issues facing the youth in Kenya. We foster community resilience, propose innovative solutions, drive social progress and enable youth empowerment. This Session has given us the opportunity to reflect and re-engineer interventions and redesign measures so as to reflect the changing environment and address needs of the youth.

This is a call-to-action to youth. Certain situations like the suddenness of the current global pandemic may have taken some of us aback and has probably made us even more vulnerable to vices and bad decisions however I implore you all to look at the bigger picture and ponder more on the future that we have envisioned rather than dwell on the present. We are unfazed by this obstacle on the path to our great future and we will give idleness and negativity no room in our minds. This is the time for you to re-engineer your thoughts, ideas and inventions. You can do many things to keep your community safe. Do not resort to crime to make ends meet.

STAY SAFE

THANK YOU

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