



Closing Remarks by the Federal Minister of Justice

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

Sadly, what I consider to have been a very exciting and constructive 31st Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Justice is now drawing to a close here in Vienna. I should like to thank all of you very much for taking up the Council of Europe's and my invitation and coming to Vienna, making the conference such a lively one through your oral contributions.

Wednesday's "fireside chat" on "Corruption – the exclusive problem of others?" opened up new perspectives for me and certainly for many of you as well, and prompted new thoughts about the direction in which we may need to work. Corruption is a subject of concern to all of us. Anyone paying careful attention to media reports can - or rather must - recognise that hardly any sphere is corruption-free. In addition to the ongoing loss of public acceptance of the law caused by the corruption experienced, this form of crime also gives rise to huge economic costs, which we cannot continue to accept at a time when the economic crisis is coming to a head. I am therefore very pleased that we were able to welcome to our fireside chat Martin Kreutner, from the International Anti-Corruption Academy, based in Laxenburg near Vienna, and to learn more about the IACA's intensive efforts to support the combating of corruption at international level. Austria was very active prior to the





foundation of the IACA in enabling this agency to come into being and providing support. I am very happy that it could ultimately be set up as an international organisation.

The presentation of a private-sector initiative showed us new paths in the combating of corruption. Three objectives underpin the Siemens Compliance System: prevention, detection and reaction. It embodies a comprehensive system of measures intended to ensure that staff members always act in full compliance with the law and with the company's own principles and rules. It may be of interest for governments, too, to consider this kind of system.

The main theme of our conference was urban violence by young people. Sadly, this has in recent years developed into an ever topical subject in Europe.

During our first session we discussed "Juveniles as perpetrators and victims". The presentation on the Norwegian action plan to prevent radicalisation was very interesting, showing that there is a need for a broad system of preventive measures at an early stage, before extremist attitudes culminate in acts of violence.

The explanations of the study of repeat offending by young males showed possible ways of avoiding repeat offending. Information of this kind is of course of great interest to every Justice Minister, and we shall certainly continue to bear it in mind.





We have learnt that the population is growing ever younger, and 60% of town-dwellers will be under 18 years of age by 2030. Young people in cities increasingly grow up in difficult social conditions. In this context the avoidance of violence among young people is regrettably taking on an ever more significant role. We have heard about some highly promising preventive practices, too.

The theme of the second session was "Organised Groups and their new ways of communicating". It is not just in Austria that modern means of communication are becoming more important for organised groups of offenders. On the other hand, they represent a specific threat to young people as well. We need to be aware of this in the context of prosecution, but also beforehand in the sphere of prevention, so as to be able to react appropriately.

There are not only violent organised groups, but also other forms of violence, which display a close connection with the Internet and modern means of communication. "Happy slapping" and violent videos, which are easy to find on the Internet, were mentioned in this context. A presentation was given of an Austrian project called "Click & Check", intended to encourage school pupils to use the Internet responsibly. We could also mention the new problem of "grooming", on which I was able last year to table a bill here in Austria making it a punishable offence for people who lie about their age to groom minors for sexual contact via social networks.

But violence does not exist only on the Internet, but also in real life. On this subject we were given some fascinating insights into a study on street crime. We were told





that gangs or potentially violent groups of youths represent first and foremost places for people on the fringes of society to socialise in alternative ways. Socialisation "on the street" provides an alternative way of achieving social status, self-esteem, power and recognition. Some ideas for preventive measures will certainly emerge from our acknowledgement of this fact.

I am very happy that we have today been able to conclude by adopting our resolution on "Responses of justice to urban violence", emphasising inter alia the importance of a justice system geared to young people, with elements of "restorative justice" and appropriate specialised training for those who deal with criminal proceedings and sentence enforcement.

Many people have helped to make this conference go off so successfully in terms of both substance and organisation, and this is why I very much wish to thank the Council of Europe in particular, but also the moderators and keynote speakers, our interpreters and all who took part, for their support, their readiness to engage in discussion and their attention! Particular and sincere thanks of course go to the organising team in my Ministry, whose members have been working very hard for the past few months preparing for this conference.

I hope that you will take away with you especially good memories of this conference in Vienna, and I wish you a good journey home!

Thank you very much!

