

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Day of General Discussion

Friday, 28 September 2001 – OHCHR (Palais Wilson, Geneva)

Violence Against Children within the Family and in Schools

**Submission by
the UN Centre for International Crime Prevention**

Centre for International Crime Prevention

Input of the Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP) for the Committee on the Rights of the Child

In the context of the discussion by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice of the issue violence against children within the family and in schools, also by the the United nations Crime Prevention Congresses account was taken of the fact that many children grow up in an adverse climate of violence and pervasive insecurity in inner-city ghettos and other marginalized areas that may be as dangerous as war zones. Rather than being safe havens, the home and school are often part of the battleground, where the young are at risk of violence, negative peer pressure and gang intimidation. By way of example, in its resolution 3/1, on violence against women and children, the Commission recalled that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993, stated that effective measures were required against female infanticide, harmful child labour, the sale of children and their organs, child prostitution, child pornography and other forms of sexual abuse. The Commission also recalled that article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/25, required States parties to that Convention to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, including sexual abuse. In addition, in the same resolution, the Commission called for the elimination of violence against women and children in the family, in the general community and where perpetrated or condoned by the State, and emphasized the duty of Governments to refrain from engaging in violence against women and children and to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, to punish acts of violence against women and children and to provide access to just and effective remedies and specialized assistance to victims.

It should be noted that strategies to safeguard children at risk should be comprehensive. Measures aimed at strengthening families should discourage pregnancies among teenagers and should improve access to critical support services, such as child-care and home visitor programmes. Such measures should focus on mitigating the situation of dysfunctional families or families characterized by erratic, absent or excessive discipline, a high probability of mistreatment and a lack of positive role models. Early intervention can help to put an end to the cycle whereby child abuse is passed on from generation to generation. It may be recalled in this connection that various measures to strengthen the family were suggested in 1994 in the context of the International Year of the Family. The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines) (General Assembly resolution 45/112, annex) indicate the directions to be pursued; they need to be more widely known and practical action models need to be provided.

In this context, schools are also playing an important role. Schools have a crucial and difficult mission: to impart knowledge and to develop know-how and to compensate for the failings of parents and society by providing a suitable environment for human growth. Especially during times of pervasive social change, conflicting values and lack of stable norms, schools need to impart moral and civic education. Moral education, which is already a part of school programmes in some countries, can help young people to develop self-control and to learn to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner rather than through aggression. There are initiatives in various countries to train teachers to prevent misbehaviour among pupils through social contacts, to manage misbehaviour when it does occur and to better deal with chronically disruptive pupils. Some forms of early intervention seek to maximize individual potential, to compensate for initial disadvantage and to provide development support. In many places, schools are increasingly becoming multi-purpose organizations, providing diagnostic and health services, counselling, sports and recreational facilities, training in basic skills, and vocational guidance. School-based community centres with comprehensive programming for youth and their families provide safe havens that are open all day throughout the year, offering a range of educational, cultural and recreational activities, as well as access to social services. Such centres could be concentrated in communities identified as having the greatest number of young people at risk.