

The 35th session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) took place in Vienna from 1–5 June 2026.

Our Eyes at Vienna — UYDEL at CCPCJ 2026

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Background

The 35th session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) was held in Vienna, Austria, from 1–5 June 2026. The CCPCJ is the main United Nations policy-making body on crime prevention and criminal justice. It provides a global platform where Member States, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, intergovernmental bodies, researchers and experts meet to discuss crime trends, justice reforms, international cooperation, and emerging threats affecting communities across the world.

This year's session took place at a critical time when crime is changing in form, scale and methods of operation. Traditional crimes such as violence, trafficking in persons, drug-related crime, child exploitation and organized criminality are increasingly linked to digital technologies, cyber-enabled fraud, artificial intelligence, online exploitation, transnational networks and illicit financial flows.

The session therefore emphasized the need for more agile, people-centred and evidence-based criminal justice systems that can prevent crime, protect victims, respond to offenders, and strengthen international cooperation.

For Uganda and Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), the session was highly relevant because many of the global issues discussed are already affecting young people and vulnerable

communities. Youth in Uganda are increasingly exposed to drug and substance abuse, online scams, gambling, cyberbullying, sexual exploitation, trafficking, violent extremism, survival crime, school dropout, unemployment and recruitment into criminal networks. These issues require prevention approaches that combine community awareness, school-based interventions, digital safety, psychosocial support, rehabilitation, livelihoods, referral systems and youth leadership.

Key themes from the five-day session

The five-day session addressed several cross-cutting themes. These included organized crime, cyber-enabled crime, trafficking in persons, forced criminality, fraud, victim protection, sextortion of children, access to justice, gender-responsive justice, prison reform, civil society participation, data coordination and international cooperation.

A key message from the session was that criminal justice systems can no longer respond to crime only after harm has occurred. Prevention must be strengthened at community, school, family, digital and institutional levels. Governments and civil society were encouraged to work together to identify early risk factors, support vulnerable groups, strengthen safe reporting mechanisms and reduce the conditions that allow crime to grow.

The session also highlighted the role of technology in both creating risks and offering solutions. Digital platforms are increasingly being used by criminal groups to identify victims, blackmail children, coordinate trafficking, spread misinformation, transfer money, hide proceeds of crime and recruit young people into illicit activity. At the same time, technology can support reporting, investigation, victim identification, data collection, case management and public awareness. This calls for careful balancing of innovation, privacy, child protection and justice.

Resolutions and main policy outcomes

The resolutions under consideration and adopted at the session focused on three major emerging crime threats: transnational sextortion of children, trafficking in persons for forced criminality, and strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to fraud. These three issues show that crime prevention must now address both physical and digital forms of exploitation.

The first resolution focused on preventing and combating transnational sextortion of children. Sextortion involves the use of threats, blackmail or coercion, often through digital platforms, to force children into further sexual exploitation, silence, payment or submission. In many cases, offenders obtain or threaten to share sexual images, videos or manipulated content. Children are exposed through social media, messaging applications, gaming platforms and peer networks. The resolution calls for stronger child protection systems, safe reporting channels, law enforcement cooperation, victim support, digital safety education and collaboration with technology companies.

This issue is important for Uganda because children and youth are increasingly active online, often without adequate digital literacy or parental supervision. Sextortion can lead to trauma, shame, school dropout, self-harm, family conflict and further exploitation. UYDEL's work with vulnerable youth, adolescent girls and young mothers should therefore include digital safety, online exploitation awareness and safe referral pathways.

The second resolution addressed trafficking in persons for forced criminality. This refers to situations where victims are recruited, transported, controlled or coerced into committing crimes for the benefit of criminal groups. These crimes may include online scams, drug trafficking, theft, begging, fraud, cybercrime and other illegal activities. The key lesson is that some young people who appear to be offenders may also be victims of exploitation. Justice systems therefore need to strengthen victim identification, trauma-informed investigation, protection services and non-punishment approaches where appropriate.

For Uganda, this is relevant to street-connected children, unemployed youth, young people in slums, refugees, girls in transactional sex, young people in drug markets and those recruited through promises of jobs or travel. UYDEL should continue strengthening protection, referral, rehabilitation and reintegration services for young people at risk of being exploited into crime.

The third resolution focused on strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to fraud. Fraud is rapidly expanding through online scams, impersonation, mobile money deception, fake investments, romance scams, cyber-enabled financial crimes and organized scam centres. Fraud is not only an economic offence; it causes psychological harm, destroys livelihoods, increases family stress and can be linked to trafficking and organized crime. The resolution calls for stronger public awareness, investigation capacity, financial intelligence,

victim reporting systems, international cooperation and partnerships with banks, telecom companies and digital platforms.

This is increasingly relevant in Uganda, where mobile money, social media and online communication are widely used by young people and communities. UYDEL can play an important role in sensitizing youth, parents, schools and slum communities about online scams, safe digital behaviour and reporting channels.

Side events, exhibitions and learning platforms

The session also featured a large programme of side events and exhibitions. These provided practical learning opportunities on issues such as prison reform, equal access to justice, women in criminal justice systems, civil society priorities, data coordination, families of persons deprived of liberty, environmental crime, trafficking, sextortion, scam centres and emerging crime trends.

The side events were useful because they created space for Member States, UN agencies, civil society, academia and practitioners to share concrete models and lessons. For UYDEL, the side events reinforced the importance of linking policy discussions with practical community-level implementation. Crime prevention must be translated into real services for children, youth, families, schools and communities.

Dr. Rogers Kasirye also had the opportunity to attend a sports expert workshop where inputs were made into a UNODC-related document on the use of sports, drama, music and art as tools for scaling up prevention. He emphasized that while sports, music, drama and art may vary across cultures, they remain powerful tools for engaging young people, building confidence, teaching life skills, reducing violence, preventing drug use and creating positive identity. These approaches are especially relevant in slum communities and schools where conventional lectures may not be attractive to youth.

He also attended side events on child sextortion, scams affecting older persons, and the NGO Alliance General Assembly. These platforms created opportunities for networking, learning and positioning UYDEL within global civil society discussions on crime prevention. The upcoming United Nations Crime Congress in Abu Dhabi was also highlighted as an important platform for continuing these discussions on prevention, justice innovation and international cooperation.

Relevance for Uganda and UYDEL

The CCPCJ discussions confirmed that Uganda's youth crime prevention agenda must address both traditional and emerging risks. Young people are not only affected by theft, violence, drug abuse and school dropout; they are also increasingly exposed to online exploitation, fraud, trafficking, gambling, cyberbullying and digital recruitment into crime.

For UYDEL, the session strongly validates ongoing work in community-based prevention, school outreach, rehabilitation, drug prevention, youth leadership, vocational skills, psychosocial support and referral systems. It also shows the need to expand prevention into digital spaces. Schools, universities, youth centres, slum communities, transport hubs and refugee settlements should be prioritized for digital safety and crime prevention education.

The session also underlined the importance of partnerships. No single institution can prevent youth crime alone. Effective prevention requires collaboration between civil society, police, justice actors, schools, health services, social workers, parents, local leaders, technology actors and youth themselves. UYDEL's experience with community policing, youth peace ambassadors, school outreach and rehabilitation provides a strong foundation for scaling integrated prevention models.

Lessons learnt

First, crime prevention must be proactive, not reactive. Waiting until young people are arrested, exploited or harmed is costly and ineffective. Early prevention in schools, families and communities is essential.

Second, digital crime is now a major child protection and youth development issue. Sextortion, scams, cyberbullying, gambling and online recruitment must be integrated into youth prevention programmes.

Third, some young people involved in crime may also be victims of trafficking, exploitation, poverty or coercion. Justice responses must therefore be balanced with protection, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Fourth, civil society has an important role in translating global policy into local action. UYDEL can help ensure that international resolutions are understood and applied in communities, schools and youth centres.

Fifth, sports, drama, music and art are not merely recreational activities; they are effective prevention tools that can build life skills, teamwork, confidence, discipline, communication and resilience among young people.

Recommended Actions for UYDEL

1. Develop a digital safety and online crime prevention package for youth.

UYDEL should design simple training materials for schools, youth centres and communities on online scams, sextortion, cyberbullying, gambling, digital peer pressure and safe reporting. This can be integrated into existing school outreach, CPCJ, drug prevention and life skills programmes.

2. Strengthen identification and referral of youth at risk of trafficking and forced criminality.

UYDEL should train social workers, peer educators, teachers and community leaders to identify warning signs of trafficking, forced criminality, sexual exploitation and drug-related coercion. Referral pathways with police, probation officers, health facilities and child protection actors should be updated and documented.

3. Scale up prevention through sports, drama, music and art.

UYDEL should package its experience in sports-based prevention, music, dance, drama and youth leadership into a structured prevention model. This should include life skills, drug prevention, violence prevention, digital safety, gender respect, counselling referrals and documentation of behavioural change.

Conclusion

The 35th session of the CCPCJ provided an important global platform for understanding emerging crime trends and strengthening international cooperation. For Uganda and UYDEL, the session confirmed that youth crime prevention must evolve to address both community-based and digital risks.

The key message is clear that prevention must be evidence-based, youth-centred, multi-sectoral and practical. UYDEL should continue positioning itself as a national and regional actor in youth crime prevention by linking global policy to local action, strengthening partnerships and scaling prevention approaches that give young people safer, healthier and more productive futures.