

Press Release

UNODC brings together Central Asian penal reform leaders to promote prison-based rehabilitation programmes

Dushanbe, 20 December 2016 – Over 50 policy-makers, justice professionals and other experts from Central Asian and other countries gathered at a regional workshop in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from 20 to 21 December 2016, to discuss promising practices and existing challenges related to the management of prison-based rehabilitation programmes.

During the workshop, hosted by the Government of Tajikistan and organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in cooperation with Penal Reform International, participants emphasized the need to strengthen education, vocational training and work programmes in prisons in line with international standards and norms.

“Prison-based rehabilitation programmes are essential for supporting successful reintegration of prisoners upon release. Therefore, the Government of Tajikistan endorsed the National Programme on Development of Income Generating Activities in prisons of Tajikistan for 2015-2020. The Government of Tajikistan allocated funds for implementation of this Programme and expressed interest in strengthening co-operation with international partners to attract additional funding” – said Mr. Ilhom Mahmudzoda, Deputy Chairperson of the Central Prison Service under the Ministry of Justice of Tajikistan.

The crucial importance of the rehabilitation of prisoners for achieving sustainable development has also been highlighted by the 13th United Nations Crime Congress, held in Doha, Qatar, in 2015. Since then, UNODC – with the financial support from the Government of Qatar – has launched a wide-ranging Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration, under which this work on the rehabilitation of prisoners is situated.

“The work towards the social reintegration of prisoners is indeed one of the principle objectives of UNODC in the area of prison reform. Its positive impact – both on individuals as well as with regards to public safety – should not be underestimated”, said Ms. Amelia Hannaford, Head of UNODC Office in Tajikistan. She further pledged continued reflection of this objective in UNODC Programme for Central Asia 2015-2019.

The regional workshop in Dushanbe is to be followed by similar conferences in different regions of the world, which will serve as a strong basis for developing concrete initiatives for the social reintegration of prisoners, and for technical support of UNODC in realising these. According to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), the primary purposes of a sentence of imprisonment – namely, the protection of society from crime and the prevention of recidivism – can only be met if the period of imprisonment is used to assist prisoners in leading law-abiding and self-supporting lives upon release.

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