**WORKSHOP E:**
STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES AGAINST OVERCROWDING IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

This workshop aims to describe the nature and extent of prison overcrowding, to analyze the reasons for it and propose what can be done to relieve it. Presentations will be made about a variety of initiatives in places across the globe to help ensure the fairness and efficiency of the criminal justice process through mitigating the effects of prison overcrowding.

Prison overcrowding is a serious impediment to upholding human rights standards. It occurs across in large parts of the globe with many of the world's prisons rife with disease, violence, and corruption, failing to meet basic standards and hindering the provision or implementation of adequate treatment programmes to prevent re-offending of prisoners. Prison populations in excess of capacity are found in all continents, in both rich and poor countries alike. But it is in middle and low income countries where conditions are most often life threatening, and the most urgent action is needed, particularly in respect of pre-trial detention. It is not uncommon for two thirds of prisoners to be awaiting for trial.

The workshop will end by addressing how to build political, judicial and public support for reducing overcrowding and limiting the use of prison - the key challenge for policy makers, particularly when media and public concern about crime is so high. Such initiatives may be for example paralegal services offering advice and representation to help to reduce the unnecessary use of pre-trial detention in low income countries as well as informal and restorative justice approaches, which divert and resolve cases outside the formal criminal justice process. Member States may be encouraged to implement community based and residential alternatives to prison sentences which treat drug users and other non violent offenders outside prison in Asia and South America; to enhance parole and early release accompanied by appropriate assessment and effective community-based programmes for more serious offenders.