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Check against delivery

Organized crime is a threat to security
Case studies and policy options

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Mr. President, Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm honoured to attend this meeting and thank the President for the invitation. Previous debates on violent theatres (Afghanistan, Congo, Central America, Somalia, West Africa) and on trans-national crimes (drug trafficking, piracy, natural resources smuggling) have shown how seriously the Council takes these threats to peace and security.

A challenge of our time

The background is well known. International mafias exploit the instability caused by conflicts. They thrive in areas lost to insurgency, and take advantage of a government's inability to provide security. This creates a vicious circle, illustrated in our report on *Crime and Instability, case studies of transnational threats*: vulnerability attracts crime, crime in turn deepens vulnerability. In a chain reaction, humanitarian crises follow, development is stalled and peace-keepers are deployed.

Historically, these problems have been limited to a few trouble spots. Yet, in our globalized world, violence in far-away locations eventually affects everybody. Today's unimpeded movement of goods, services, capital, people and information is creating wealth and freedom; it has also unleashed unprecedented opportunities for organized crime to wreck both.

The Council's past reviews of these issues faced a tough dilemma: how can a multilateral system created to deal with tensions *between* nations, fight criminal groups that are *non-state*, yet *transnational and powerful* enough to threaten sovereign states? First of all, states must strengthen their own capacity. But, given the global nature of this threat, national efforts must be part of a multilateral framework. How can this be done?

(i) Development and security

First, vulnerability to organized crime can be reduced most effectively through development and security, the basic pillars of this institution.

- i) Development is the best prevention. Throughout the world, prosperity and good governance are vaccines against violence. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the most effective antidote to crime, while crime prevention helps to reach the MDGs.

- ii) Security is equally crucial. By resolving conflicts and helping governments to enforce the law, this Council not only builds peace: you make the affected regions less prone to crime. Conversely, fighting crime helps take out spoilers who invest in violence and instability.

To illustrate all this, take a map of illicit trafficking routes and overlay it with a map of conflicts. Then juxtapose a histogram of per-capita incomes. You will see that crime, violence and underdevelopment overlap. And these regions, of course, coincide with UN peacekeeping operations.

(ii) Justice

But we cannot just throw money or troops at this problem. Peace and prosperity also depend on justice, namely on the legal frameworks and judicial institutions needed to ensure the rule of law.

A global legal framework exists. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), adopted in Palermo ten years ago, is a 21st century solution to a 21st century problem. Yet, 1/3 of Member States, including some major countries, have not yet ratified it. Implementation is patchy. There is no review mechanism. Some TOC Protocols are neglected.

This Council can help. Later in the year, a Treaty Event at the General Assembly, two ministerial sessions (in New York and Vienna) and a Conference of the Parties will promote UNTOC ratification. They will also call for technical assistance and consider a mechanism to review implementation. A strong signal from this Council to take these TOC-related events seriously would add a sense of purpose and urgency.

Equally important are the institutions needed to administer justice. So many countries lack the resources to make them work. I invite the development assistance community to help UNODC upgrade criminal justice systems in vulnerable countries, especially in Africa.

There is also a health dimension. Unless the threat posed by organized crime is confronted resolutely, we will hear renewed calls to dump the three UN drug conventions that critics say are the cause of the crime problem. Drug legalization would cause a health disaster, especially in poor countries.

(iii) Knowledge

We also need better knowledge about the ways organized crime operates. Technology has practically abolished time and space: so we should know what goes on around the planet, at any moment. We don't. There are so many forgotten places, out of government control, too scary for investors and tourists. These are precisely the places where smugglers, insurgents and terrorists operate: unperturbed and undetected, they run fleets of ships and planes, trucks and containers that carry tons of drugs and weapons. Their activities are mostly discovered by chance: a crash of a phantom plane, a drug ship short of fuel, a fortuitous seizure of an illicit cargo.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are many blank spots on our radar screens and our ignorance about what goes on has deadly consequences.

We need a change in attitude. It is time to regard information sharing as a way of strengthening sovereignty, not surrendering it. If police stop at borders while criminals cross them freely, sovereignty is already breached – actually, it is surrendered to those who break the law. A more cooperative attitude will help establish networks to monitor illicit flows, share intelligence and carry-out joint operations. UNODC supports this in Central and West Asia, the Gulf, West Africa, and along the main drug routes into Europe and across meso-America. More is needed, for example across the Sahara-Sahel region, as proposed to the Council in December.

We must also be able to measure progress. At the moment, unlike in other areas where the UN is the world's best information provider, we cannot report on crime trends, nor propose an integrated understanding of its causes and consequences. Intellectual and financial resources are required to develop the right expertise -- to serve your needs.

(iv) Enabling factors

Fourth, corruption and money-laundering enable crime to prosper.

Concerning corruption, I am glad that the Conference of States Parties in Doha last November agreed on a mechanism to monitor implementation of the anti-corruption Convention (UNCAC). I commit my Office to provide periodic evidence of the progress made in fighting a crime that, not only steals from the needy to enrich the greedy, but lubricates other crimes. Going back to the cargo planes loaded with drugs and arms I mentioned

earlier, I keep asking: how are fraudulent pilot certificates, false registrations, forged bills of landing and altered tail numbers produced? How are massive shipments of counterfeit goods, illegally cut timber or hazardous waste shipped world-wide? The “c” word has a lot to do with it.

Then there is money-laundering. Current arrangements have made it harder to recycle money through the financial system. But so many black holes -- informal money transfers (*hawala*), offshore banking, recycling through real estates and liquid assets -- need to be plugged.

To put into perspective the massive proceeds from crime, think of this: the regular budget of UNODC is 1% of the UN budget, that itself is less than 1% of the yearly proceeds from the global drug trade (\$320b). Or, put otherwise, one line of cocaine snorted in Europe kills one square metre of Andean rain forest, and buys 100 rounds of AK-47 ammunition in West Africa. Multiply this by 850 tons (of cocaine/year) and you get a sense that this is a more uneven fight than between David and Goliath.

(v) A system-wide response

Fifth, because of the cross-cutting nature of organized crime, a system-wide response is of course needed. I am pleased that this Council supports the growing cooperation among DPA, DPKO, UNODC and the Peacebuilding Commission. This will ensure that the UN’s conflict prevention, crisis management and peace-keeping include a criminal justice component.

Concerning the future, I’m glad for the suggestion that the Security Council hold periodic debates on the threat posed by organized crime to stability. Early warnings could be brought to this Council’s attention, as we did some time ago when we discovered the attacks on West Africa by cocaine traffickers. The Council may also want to consider including a criminal justice component into relevant peace-keeping missions.

To conclude, we need deeds more than words. Last week in West Africa ECOWAS ministers told me that cocaine trafficking in the region declined in the past 18 months. However, there are warning signs that traffickers are returning on the scene because tough words have not been matched by equally robust actions. Let’s learn the lesson.

Thank you for attention.