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Asian integration: Transnational organized crime is set to expand significantly unless action is taken

Bangkok (Thailand) 31 October 2014 – Transnational crime and public security threats in Asia risk overwhelming the border management, law enforcement and justice agencies of many states following the acceleration of trade and migration flows as the integration of the region progresses in 2015, warned speakers at a high-level UN meeting today.

Backed by extensive investment in transportation systems and a coordinated lowering of trade and visa barriers, the downside risks of well intentioned integration plans do not appear to be fully understood or considered by many regional policy leaders, several of the speakers cautioned.

Increases are likely in drug trafficking and related crimes, human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, trade in counterfeit goods and fraudulent medicines, and environmental crimes such as the trafficking of illegal timber and wildlife, senior experts noted, unless effective national and regional responses, including cooperation mechanisms, are quickly established and supported.

“Transnational organised crime in Southeast Asia alone is conservatively estimated to generate close to USD \$100 billion per year, threatening intended economic and social benefits of regional integration,” said Mr. Jeremy Douglas, UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)) Regional Representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. “Proceeds of organised crime from several other parts of Asia are also significant and growing, and are destabilising the region.

“Without effective and integrated border management, law enforcement and justice strategies, organized criminal groups will continue to expand without respect for borders and the sovereignty of states, threatening prosperity and public security. Increased illicit revenues will spread corruption, distort and impact economies, and harm people across the region,” said Mr. Douglas at the UNODC high-level meeting, *Supporting the Integration of Asia Through Effective Public Security*.

The conference brought senior officials together from several UN development agencies, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UNODC, the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN parliamentarians, diplomatic missions, governments from across Asia and the Asian Development Bank to discuss regional integration plans, transnational crime threats and challenges that are expected to accelerate, and possible and necessary responses to these threats.

“Asia is a source of and destination for illicit flows that generate huge and growing profits for organized transnational criminal groups,” Mr. Douglas said. “Governments and their international partners would see big economic and public security benefits from a concerted effort to plan jointly as Asian integration accelerates.”



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

For further information please contact:

In Bangkok

Mr. Richard Priem,

UNODC Regional Office for South-East Asia and the Pacific

M: +66.86.365.3606 E: richard.priem@unodc.org

In Istanbul

John Bleho

UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific

E: john.bleho@unodc.org

Skype: john.bleho +90.212.245.1125 (Istanbul land line)