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UNODC mandate

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs, transnational organized crime, terrorism and corruption, and is the guardian of most of the related conventions, particularly:

- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols (against trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in firearms)
- The United Nations Convention against Corruption
- The international drug control conventions

UNODC was established in 1997 as a result of the merging of the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. It was established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to enable the Organization to focus and enhance its capacity to address the interrelated issues of drug control, crime and international terrorism in all its forms.

In the same year, UNODC Southern Africa was formed and now covers 11 countries in the region, namely: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
UNODC is committed to achieving security and justice for all by making the world safer from drugs, crime and terrorism. To assist countries in this goal, UNODC Southern Africa’s work is structured around six key objectives:

- **Strengthening the legislative and judicial capacity** of Southern African countries to ratify and implement international conventions and instruments on drug control, organized crime, corruption, terrorism and money-laundering

- **Assisting Southern African countries** in reducing drug trafficking and in controlling precursor chemicals

- **Enhancing the capacity** of Government institutions and civil society organizations in the Southern African region to counter trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in organs

- **Creating awareness** about and reducing the incidence of domestic violence in Southern Africa in cooperation with civil society and Governments

- **Promoting victim empowerment** by improving coordination, building capacity and strengthening relations between Governments and civil society in order to improve services to victims, especially women and children
In its project “Strengthening law enforcement capacity (border control operations) and criminal justice response to smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons”, UNODC Southern Africa has adopted an approach that aims to stem illegal migration by preventing and combating smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons from Africa to Europe.

Funded by the European Union, the project aims to support the implementation of South Africa’s National Integrated Border Management Strategy for the period 2008-2010 by providing technical assistance that promotes cooperation, coordination, mutual support, information sharing and joint operations between applicable agencies.

With a land border shared with six countries that is 4,862 km long, 10 international airports providing excellent regional and international connections and eight international seaports, South Africa is an important transit route and embarkation point for organized criminal networks involved in trafficking persons and smuggling migrants.
As a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), South Africa has signed the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons, which will enable persons to move freely within the 14 SADC member States. This development presents new challenges to border management considering that, as the economic powerhouse of the region, South Africa attracts economic migrants as well as illegal migration.

Through a partnership between UNODC Southern Africa, the South African Border Control Operational Coordinating Committee, the Netherlands and the European Police Office (Europol), the project aims to benefit vulnerable individuals, especially women and children, and achieve the following results:

- **Enhanced capacity** of border control agencies to implement the National Integrated Border Management Strategy for the period 2008-2010
- **Improved skills** to detect fraudulent and fraudulently obtained travel documents and better exchange of information between the inter-agency teams at ports of entry, as well as consular offices abroad
- **Improved knowledge** on smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons
- **Improved international cooperation** at the bilateral level or with Europol and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)
- **Increased awareness** about smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons
Criminal justice and anti-corruption

As the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, UNODC has been assisting Governments in the Southern African region to develop and implement national legislation in order to ensure alignment with the Conventions. UNODC has provided technical assistance to criminal justice practitioners, promoted cross-border information sharing in order to assess and analyse crime trends, assisted Member States in the implementation of anti-corruption initiatives, and worked towards better alignment among national criminal justice systems in the region.

Assisting Governments in their work against corruption implies assisting them in a variety of efforts, ranging from prevention to legislative drafting, law enforcement and criminalization, and asset recovery. The focus of the Southern African office of UNODC has been to work alongside Governments in the legislative processes of
establishing anti-corruption organs and provide technical assistance to these institutions. Most notably, UNODC Southern Africa has recently worked on anti-corruption issues with the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland. On-site capacity-building initiatives with investigators and other professionals have led to excellent advances in investigations into corruption. With the aim of increasing the number of corruption cases that move beyond investigation to successful prosecution and asset recovery, UNODC Southern Africa seeks to widen its assistance to include capacity-building among prosecution authorities across the region. Current plans include the establishment of a regional forum of national prosecution authorities, which will help facilitate cross-border investigations, prosecutions and asset recovery, as well as strengthen efforts to align procedures and standards related to the penal provisions of the Conventions.

UNODC Southern Africa is concerned with strengthening criminal justice systems in the region. The office has conducted an extensive study of the levels of integrity and capacity of the South African justice system that has, in turn, informed the development of its current initiative on strengthening the integrity and capacity of low-level courts in three pilot provinces. It is envisaged that this initiative will be expanded to include low-level courts across South Africa and that lessons learned from this multi-year engagement will inform similar criminal justice initiatives in other countries in the region.

In dealing with juvenile offenders, UNODC Southern Africa has developed a comprehensive multi-pronged programme that aims to assist Governments in the region to develop and implement policies for children and youth in conflict with the law.
In 1998, having recognized the seriousness of the world drug problem, Member States convened a special session of the General Assembly at which they committed themselves to a vigorous plan of action to reduce both the supply of and demand for drugs. As a result, UNODC assists Member States in developing best international practices with regard to the treatment and rehabilitation of drug users and prevention activities that provide people, particularly at-risk youth, with the information, skills and opportunities to make healthy choices, including that of not using drugs.

As the lead United Nations entity tackling drug demand reduction in South Africa, UNODC Southern Africa has partnered with the Government of South Africa through various relevant national departments in implementing a series of large-scale projects.

In 1999, UNODC Southern Africa launched the project “Community-based counselling, treatment and rehabilitation
services for drug abusers in disadvantaged areas” with the Department of Social Development. Aimed at preventing and reducing drug abuse by mobilizing support at all levels in previously disadvantaged communities of South Africa, the project offered treatment and counselling to drug users, while offering viable alternatives to recovering addicts, and developing the talents and skills of populations at risk in these communities, in particular youth.

In 2004, in partnership with the National Department of Education and the National Department of Social Development, UNODC Southern Africa implemented the “National drug awareness and schools education programme”. The objective of the project was to develop and implement a strategy in South Africa aimed at providing drug abuse prevention services in primary and secondary schools, as well as among out-of-school youth.

Each year, the global community observes 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which was proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/112 of 7 December 1987. The day - commonly referred to as World Drug Day - is an important opportunity to continue to raise public awareness, in Southern Africa and globally, about the fight against drug use and trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
UNODC is a co-sponsor of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). In accordance with the UNAIDS division of labour, UNODC is the lead agency for HIV prevention and care among injecting drug users and in prison settings. UNODC is also responsible for facilitating the development of a United Nations-wide response to HIV and AIDS associated with persons vulnerable to human trafficking. In addition, UNODC ensures the inclusion of young people, women and civil society organizations in the development and implementation of programmes.

The focus of UNODC’s global HIV programme is to assist countries in implementing large-scale and wide-ranging evidence-informed and human rights-based interventions to prevent HIV transmission and to provide treatment, care and support to people living with HIV and AIDS.
In this regard, UNODC Southern Africa provides tailored support to Governments and civil society organizations in the region in developing and implementing comprehensive and evidence-based policies and interventions.

UNODC’s work in the region is done in partnership with UNAIDS co-sponsoring organizations and key partners, including civil society organizations and organizations of people living with HIV. The Office also works with the United Nations Joint Teams on AIDS and specific national technical working groups on areas in which UNODC has a lead role within the broad framework of the United Nations Implementation Support Plans.

UNODC works hand-in-hand with all relevant stakeholders in the health, law enforcement and criminal justice sectors, as well as with representatives of civil society and community-based organizations such as drug users’ organizations and people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS.

UNODC believes that regional civil society organizations play a vital role in HIV and AIDS prevention and care among these vulnerable groups by empowering them so that their voices are heard when decisions that affect their lives are made. UNODC Southern Africa has thus been actively promoting the involvement of such organizations, as well as working to build their capacity to meaningfully and constructively contribute to the development and implementation of appropriate policies, strategies and programmes for injecting drug users, prisoners and persons vulnerable to human trafficking.
Virtually every country in the world is affected by trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. The challenge for all countries, rich and poor, is to target the criminals who exploit desperate people and to protect and assist victims of trafficking as well as smuggled migrants, many of whom endure unimaginable hardships in their bid for a better life.

By definition, trafficking in persons is the acquisition of people by improper means, such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them, while the smuggling of migrants involves the procurement, for financial or other material benefit, of illegal entry of a person into a State of which that person is not a national or resident.

As the only United Nations entity focusing on the criminal justice element of these crimes, the work that UNODC does to combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on those two issues: the

Trafficking in persons is a major global concern affecting all regions of the world, including Southern Africa. Building on the growing awareness and recognition of the need for a coordinated response in order to combat this crime at the continental, regional and national level, UNODC Southern Africa predicates its work on the ratification and effective implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. This includes drafting of specialized legislation, harmonization of existing legislation and development of regional and national policies and plans of action.

UNODC Southern Africa has partnered with the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to provide legal and technical advice and assistance to all SADC member States in order to strengthen their legal and technical capacities in ratifying and implementing the Convention and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. UNODC Southern Africa is also undertaking assessments of legislation and policies on trafficking in persons in selected SADC member States with the aim of providing legal and technical assistance in drafting specialized legislation and developing national policies and plans of action. The office is furthermore assisting SADC with the development and adoption of a SADC plan of action to combat trafficking in persons and will be assisting the SADC Secretariat with the implementation of this plan of action.

As part of its global programme to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, UNODC continues to provide regional training, advice and assistance on international cooperation including mutual legal assistance, extradition, joint investigations and exchange of information in order to strengthen intraregional and international cooperation in terms of the Convention and the appropriate Protocols.
UNODC is supporting the Government of South Africa in addressing one of the major priorities of the 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy. Through the European Union-funded project “Support to South Africa’s Victim Empowerment Programme”, launched in 2008, UNODC is working in close partnership with the Department of Social Development and other key stakeholders to address the high rates of criminal victimization in the country, particularly with regard to women and vulnerable children.

The main purpose of the Victim Empowerment Programme is to facilitate the establishment and integration of interdepartmental/intersectoral programmes and policies for the support, protection and empowerment of victims of crime and violence. Building on this, the Programme’s overall development objective is to contribute to building safe and peaceful communities by strengthening the human rights culture and providing more effective, multisectoral, coordinated responses to victims of crime and trauma.
In the framework of the project, the Government and civil society aim to do the following:

- To build institutional capacity within the South African Department of Social Development, at both the national and provincial levels, to lead, expand and sustain the Victim Empowerment Programme in South Africa.

- To improve coordination and cooperation between government departments and civil society organizations to harmonize services to victims of crime. With the understanding that victim empowerment is a cross-cutting theme covering many government departments at the national and provincial levels, the project aims to assist in implementing mechanisms and practices in order to strengthen coordination and cooperation among all those involved in empowering victims.

- To promote awareness of South Africa’s victim empowerment policies. A critical component of the Victim Empowerment Programme is sustained advocacy among politicians and the public at large in order to generate the necessary political support and raise public awareness of the rights of victims of crime, the assistance and services available to victims and ways of accessing these services.

- To build capacity among civil society organizations to empower victims. As part of the project, UNODC will work with organizations dealing with victims of crime, trauma and violence. As established and emerging organizations play a major role in delivering services to victims, the project’s contribution will ensure assistance from both a technical advisory and funding perspective.
In the Southern African region, violence against women is rife. The lack of services for survivors and of effective responses by law enforcement officers makes this issue a human security problem. UNODC has developed the *Handbook on Effective Police Responses to Violence against Women* to furnish law enforcement officers with information that will enable them to identify key elements in defining violence against women. The Handbook has proved essential in boosting the number of cases of violence against women that are reported to the authorities.

In light of the success the Handbook has enjoyed in other regions of the world, UNODC Southern Africa has launched a project aimed at tailoring its contents to the needs of the region. To provide further assistance, the regional office is also carrying out training and capacity-building initiatives in six countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the framework of a project that was initiated in
March 2008 and is being implemented in partnership with SADC and the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation.

The mandate for the project comes from Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/29, entitled “Crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women and girls”, in which the Council recognized the importance of targeting the special needs of women and girls in the criminal justice system. That resolution, coupled with several General Assembly resolutions, provides the legal basis for UNODC to assist in countering violence against women and providing help to victims.

The project also builds on work already done by UNODC Southern Africa, such as the establishment of three one-stop centres, one in each of the provinces of Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape, all of which have been handed over to the South African Government. Each centre has provided a range of services (legal, counselling, medical) to the survivors of violence (specifically women and children) and rehabilitation services, including counselling and support groups for men who have been or who are seen to be potential perpetrators of violence in order to break the cycle of domestic violence. UNODC Southern Africa is running additional one-stop centres in Mitchell’s Plain (Western Cape), Vryburg (North West) and Sunnyside (Gauteng).
The operational work of UNODC is underpinned by several United Nations conventions and their related protocols. As a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs, transnational organized crime, terrorism, and corruption, UNODC is the guardian of most of these treaties and conventions.

CRIME-RELATED TREATIES:

- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/25 and is the main international instrument in the fight against such crime.

The Convention is a legally-binding instrument that commits States that have ratified it to taking concrete measures against transnational organized crime. For example, States Parties to the Convention must pass laws making certain
activities illegal, adopt sweeping frameworks to facilitate mutual legal assistance, extraditions and cooperation among law enforcement authorities, and provide technical assistance and training.

The Convention is supplemented by the following three protocols, each of which targets a specific area and manifestation of organized crime:

- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
- The Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air
- The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition

- United Nations Convention against Corruption

In its resolution 55/61, the General Assembly recognized that an effective international legal instrument against corruption, independent of the United Nation Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, was desirable. Resulting from this, the United Nations Convention against Corruption was adopted by the General Assembly in 2003 by resolution 58/4. The Convention is the first and only legally binding international anti-corruption instrument and the mandatory character of many of its provisions make it a unique tool for developing a comprehensive response to a global problem. The Convention covers five main areas: prevention, criminalization and law enforcement measures, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange.

In November 2009 the third session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption took place in Doha and was represented by 141 countries including members of Governments, regional and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and the media.
DRUG-RELATED TREATIES:


An important purpose of the first two treaties is to codify internationally applicable control measures in order to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, and to prevent their diversion into illicit channels. The treaties also include general provisions on drug trafficking and use. The 1988 Convention provides comprehensive measures against drug trafficking, including provisions against money-laundering and the diversion of precursor chemicals. It provides for international cooperation for the extradition of drug traffickers, controlled deliveries and the transfer of proceedings.
TERRORISM-RELATED TREATIES:

The universal conventions and protocols against terrorism, which have been developed under the auspices of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, are open to ratification by all Member States. Between 1963 and 1999, the international community negotiated 12 universal legal instruments relating to the prevention and suppression of terrorism.

These universal legal instruments are a major element of the global regime against terrorism and provide an important framework for international cooperation in countering terrorism. In addition, a comprehensive convention on international terrorism is being elaborated under the auspices of the United Nations.
For more information on UNODC’s programmes in Southern Africa, please see our contact details below:

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