Vienna. 16 July 2012. UNODC today launched a new global awareness-raising campaign emphasizing the size and cost of transnational organized crime. Profiling this multibillion dollar a year threat to peace, human security and prosperity, the campaign illustrates the key financial and social costs of this international problem through a new public service announcement video and dedicated fact sheets for journalists.

With a turnover estimated to be around US$ 870 billion a year, organized criminal networks profit from the sale of illegal goods wherever there is a demand. These immense illicit funds are worth more than 6 times the amount of official development assistance, and are comparable to 1.5 per cent of global GDP, or 7 per cent of the world’s exports of merchandise.

Available at www.unodc.org/toc, the campaign is being rolled-out through online channels and international broadcasters and aims to raise awareness of the economic costs and human impact of this threat. By dealing with issues such as human trafficking, the smuggling of migrants, counterfeiting, illicit drugs, environmental crime and illegal arms, it offer an insight into today’s core criminal areas.

With an estimated value of US$ 320 billion a year, drug trafficking is the most lucrative form of business for criminals. Human trafficking brings in about US$ 32 billion annually, while some estimates place the global value of smuggling of migrants at US$ 7 billion per year. The environment is also exploited: trafficking in timber generates revenues of US$ 3.5 billion a year in South-East Asia alone, while elephant ivory, rhino horn and tiger parts from Africa and Asia produces US$ 75 million annually in criminal turnover. At US$ 250 billion a year, counterfeiting is also a very high earner for organized crime groups.

Besides these monetary figures, the human cost associated with transnational organized crime is also a major concern, with countless lives being lost each year. Drug-related health problems and violence, firearm deaths, and the unscrupulous methods and motives of human traffickers and migrant smugglers are all part of this. Millions of victims are affected each year as a result of the activities of organized crime groups with human trafficking victims alone numbering 2.4 million at any one time.

The UNODC-led campaign also illustrates that despite being a global threat, the effects of transnational organized crime are felt locally. Crime groups can destabilize countries and entire regions, undermining development assistance in those areas and increasing domestic corruption, extortion, racketeering and violence.

“Transnational organized crime reaches into every region, and every country across the world. Stopping this transnational threat represents one of the international community’s greatest global challenges”, said UNODC Executive Director, Yury Fedotov. “Crucial to our success is our ability to raise public awareness and generate understanding among key decision and policy makers. I hope that the media will use UNODC’s campaign to highlight exactly how criminals undermine societies and cause suffering and pain to individuals and communities,” he added.
The campaign drives the message that someone ultimately suffers and there is always a victim. Money for instance is laundered through banking systems, undermining legitimate international commerce. People become victims of identity theft with 1.5 million people each year being caught out. Criminal groups traffic women for sexual exploitation and children for purposes of forced begging, burglary and pick pocketing. Fraudulent medicines and food products enter the licit market and not only defraud the public but can put their lives and health at risk.

The multi-language campaign consists of a 30- and 60-second Public Service Announcement, a set of posters, a series of fact sheets and various online banners. All materials are available through the campaign website – www.unodc.org/toc.

A social media outreach component is also being rolled-out through Twitter (@unodc; #TOC), Facebook (facebook.com/unodc); Google+ (plus.ly/unodc).

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