
***Professional Peer Review of the
UNODC Research Function***

*Final report
May 2018*

Disclaimer

This evaluation report was prepared by an independent panel of external professional peers consisting of Stefan Schweinfest (Director of the UN Statistics Division, UN-DESA), Sarah Cook (Director of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Center) and Daniel Brombacher (Head of Project, Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), with the support of an external consultant, Deborah Alimi (drug expert). The United Nations Evaluation Group and the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provided the normative tools and guidelines that were used in the review process.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion or official position whatsoever on the part of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), IEU, UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch nor any other units of UNODC, the United Nations, UNICEF or the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH nor the German Federal Government. The opinions expressed in this report should be considered as the authors' own, in their individual capacities.

This report has not been formally edited.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ARQ	Annual report questionnaire
CCPCJ	UNODC Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
CEB	UNODC Corruption and Economic Crime Branch
CND	United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs
CoE	UNODC/INEGI Center of Excellence for Statistics on Governance, Public Security, Victimization and Justice in Mexico
CSO	Civil society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DHB	UNODC Drug Prevention and Health Branch
DPA	UNODC Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs
DTA	UNODC Division for Treaty Affairs
DO	UNODC Division for Operations
ED	Executive Director (UNODC)
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EQA	Evaluation Quality Assessment
ExCom	UNODC Executive Committee
FinGov	UNODC Open-ended Working Group on Governance and Finance
GBs	Governing Bodies (UNODC)
GITOC	Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime
GLOTIP	UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons
HCV	Hepatitis C virus
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HQ	UNODC headquarters in Vienna
ICCS	International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
ILO	International Labour Organization
IEU	UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit
IO	International organisation
INEGI	National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico
MS	Member State/s
OCB	UNODC Organized Crime and Illicit Trafficking Branch
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PR/P	Peer Review/Panel
PM	Permanent Mission
RAB	UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends programme
TA	Technical assistance
TiP	Trafficking in persons
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UN-DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEG N&S	UNEG Norms and Standards
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WDR	UNODC World Drug Report
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

Background and context

Since 2004, peer review exercises across the UN have traditionally focused on the evaluation function of multilateral agencies¹. In 2007, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation network and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) established a task force to develop a shared framework for professional peer reviews (PPRs), based on previous experiences and internationally recognized standards. PPRs do not constitute an assessment of the effectiveness per se of an organization but serve as a basis upon which to test its capacity and quality of services and practices. Many issues could thus be analysed under three criteria for evaluation: independence, credibility and utility (Framework for PPR, 2007). Peer reviews rely on mutual trust among peers and confidence in the peer review process, and have proven to be important tools to inform the work of international organisations and UN entities in a variety of policy fields. PPRs provide multiple benefits through their focus on best practices, achievements and potential for progress. With the aim of strengthening UN agencies' core functions, the scope of peer review exercises has been extended to be applied to the research function of UNODC as implemented by its dedicated organizational unit, the Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB).

This review takes place at a strategic time for the Office with potentially significant implications for its research portfolio. First, the current overarching Thematic Programme on Research, Trend Analysis and Forensics (2015-2016) needs to be extended. It is thus timely and appropriate to initiate a peer review to identify good practices and lessons learned to inform the elaboration of a new Programme. Second, the illicit drug trade and transnational organized crime landscapes and their corresponding international policy environments have evolved significantly in the last five years. As part of its research mandates, UNODC is committed to exploring emerging challenges and rising complex transnational phenomena such as trafficking of new psychoactive substances, financing of terrorism and wildlife crime. Besides, international policy debates place new responsibilities at the core of UNODC research. The outcome document adopted at the UNGASS 2016 on the world drug problem called on UNODC to improve and broaden drug metrics, indicators and analytical dimensions (including health, environmental, social and/or gender dimensions). Finally, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda expands UNODC's responsibilities. It includes issues within UNODC's mandates such as drug trafficking and use, rule of law, access to justice, transnational organized crime, trafficking in persons, illicit financial flows and corruption. In this framework, UNODC has been identified as the global custodian agency for a number of SDG indicators related to its areas of expertise and is expected to contribute to consolidate the evidence basis for a number of SDGs. This includes broadening the scope of its research to analyse mandated areas in relation to social, economic and environmentally sustainable development.

¹ The most recent ones include peer reviews of the evaluation function of several UN agencies such as UNIDO (2010), UNEP (2012), WFP (2014), UN Women (2014), UNRWA (2016) and most recently of UNODC in April 2017.

This Peer Review was carried out concurrently with an in-depth cluster evaluation of five of the main research projects implemented by RAB. It follows an in-depth evaluation of the two projects related to the scientific forensic field, i.e. the Global Scientific and Forensic Services Programme (GLO54) and the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends Programme (GLOJ88) and thus do not review the forensic dimension of the UNODC research function.

Purpose and scope

As stated in its Terms of Reference, this exercise intends to respond to the following overarching assessment question: ***“Are the Office’s research function, methodologies, its products and services: impartial; credible; accurate and useful for policy-making, as assessed by a Panel of professional research peers against the principles set out in the UNODC Thematic Programme on Research, Trend Analysis and Forensics?”***

The Professional Peer Review of the UNODC research function as implemented by the Research and Trend Analysis Branch was undertaken with the aim of ensuring that the function is fully fit for purpose, well equipped to make an optimal contribution to the work of the Office and those it serves, and matched to UNODC’s evolving approach. To that end, certain specificities related to the UNODC research function were taken into account:

- *Its objects of research and the required data comparability:* The research conducted at UNODC involves analyzing transnational, illicit phenomena, which requires comparing a range of collected data across countries, and - in turn - transparent and impartial cooperation with the main first-hand data providers, i.e. Member States.
- *Its institutional environment:* undertaking research in a United Nations environment needs to meet the same, universal research standards and ethics as a research institute, as well as to bring an added value to the intergovernmental work of the Organization.
- *Its policy environment and expanding responsibilities:* In the last five years, issues at the core of UNODC’s mandate have been recognized as integral parts of the Sustainable Development Agenda; making UNODC the global custodian agency for a number of SDG indicators.

The Peer Review Panel has assessed how the research function is currently implemented by UNODC, given its objectives, organizational arrangements and financial situation. While the adequacy of existing financial and human resources to reach the highest standards of research may be commented upon, it will not be within the scope of the peer review to look into administrative issues and/or present options to change the current level of human and financial resources. These aspects were analysed in the Mid-term cluster evaluation (2018)².

The Peer review focused on the methods and approach used in the development of UNODC research products, the collaborative research practices used, and the dissemination strategies deployed. It aims

² Independent In-depth cluster evaluation of Global research projects of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch (2011-2017), March 2018. The main objective of this cluster evaluation is to generate learning for future UNODC research programming, in addition to assessing past achievements of the thematic programme, and their constituent projects, as regards to their design, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and Human Rights and Gender equality (HRG) mainstreaming.

at identifying best practices, main achievements and areas of potential progress in terms of the relevance, accuracy, impartiality and accessibility of UNODC research. Issues related to research methodology, quality assurance and cooperation with MS and external stakeholders are also addressed.

Review approach, methodology and activities

Core assessment criteria and normative framework rationale

In line with UNEG-DAC Framework for Peer Reviews (2007) and the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System (2011) and adapted from the UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) peer review normative framework and the list of assessment indicators proposed in the ToRs, a specific normative framework was designed to structure the peer review to best respond to the particularities of evaluating a research function. The detailed framework (annexed to this report) was based on three core criteria of assessment defined as follows:

- **RELEVANCE:** The extent to which the research function is suited to the priorities and needs of the target groups (UNODC as a whole, Member States, general audience). The emphasis was put on the adequacy, accessibility and utility of research.
- **CREDIBILITY:** The extent to which research activities are conducted in a professional and transparent way to ensure the quality of the resulting data and analysis. The accuracy, quality and reliability of data, as well as the capacity to innovate were stressed.
- **IMPARTIALITY:** The extent to which research objectives are balanced (between existing mandates and emerging issues) and possible biases avoided. Issues related to confidentiality, transparency and integrity of research were assessed under this criterion.

The Professional Peer Panel: roles and responsibilities

The success of this exercise relied heavily on mutual trust among staff of the organization under review and its peer evaluators. It was also important for the peer review to remain a learning experience, based on dialogue and direct exchange with the organization under review. Following consultations within UNODC, a Peer Review Panel of professionals in the field of research was assembled to carry out the assessment, based on relevant professional experience, independence and institutional affiliations. Panel members were selected according to their knowledge of the drug and crime domains, their expertise in quantitative and qualitative data collection processes - in particular within the SDG monitoring framework - and their willingness to draw on their own experiences as statisticians, researchers and managers within and outside the UN system. The combination of these criteria and the voluntary nature of serving resulted in the following Panel composition:

- Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the UN Statistics Division, UN-DESA;
- Ms. Sarah Cook, Director of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Center;
- Mr. Daniel Brombacher, Head of Project, Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development (GPDPD), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Germany

The Panel was supported by the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch as well as the IEU and an evaluation consultant. A detailed presentation of their respective roles is available in the annexed ToRs.

Empirical strategy and conduct of the review

To ensure a review that was as comprehensive as possible, the PRP generated an evidence base by considering primary and secondary sources of empirical material and information. The following assessment tools and methods were used:

- A desk review of documents related to the organization of research work inside UNODC, documentation regarding key RAB activities and outputs, and general research guiding principles and policies.
- Rounds of individual and group discussions with the UNODC Executive Director, RAB staff, as well as other UNODC managers and staff involved in research during a visit by the Panel members to UNODC HQ in Vienna. The discussions focused on: i) research ethics and methodologies; ii) data collection and analysis practices, including advantages and constraints; and iii) internal and external coordination mechanisms.
- A review of the quality of a sample of data and research reports selected from RAB outputs from the period 2013-2016.
- Close to 30 phone interviews with MS delegates and relevant non-RAB and external stakeholders (including staff from UNODC country and regional offices, inter-governmental organizations, academic researchers and civil society experts). The interviews were led by each of the Panel members under Chatham House Rules.³
- A web survey to measure Member States' perceptions of UNODC research outputs and practices.

All documents related to the activities conducted in the framework of the PR are available in annexes.

The review process unfolded as follows:

- Preparation phase (January – March 2017): Mobilization of the Panel and recruitment of an external consultant.
- Fact-finding phase (April – June 2017): Desk review of relevant documents; visit by the Panel to UNODC HQ; bilateral interviews of relevant external stakeholders; web survey administration and results analysis, and research output quality assessment.
- Report preparation phase: (June - July 2017): Drafting and peer exchange sessions between the Panel, RAB staff, and IEU;
- Review and finalisation phase (autumn 2017-spring 2018).

Limitations of the exercise

The peer review panel notes the following possible limitations:

- The Panel made considerable efforts in preparing a representative sample of relevant stakeholders involved in UNODC research and in adopting an inclusive and interactive approach. The list of relevant stakeholders surveyed and interviewed was drawn up in close consultation with RAB and IEU. It included representatives of research divisions of UN entities, regional

³ Statements made may be quoted, but without attribution to a specific individual, organization or country.

organizations, CSOs, academia and Member States' focal points – all contacted on the basis of their involvement and interest in UNODC research. The survey was also sent out to all Permanent Missions in Vienna as well as to a list of regular research focal points in capitals. Nevertheless, the assessment facing constraints of time and being based on the voluntary participation, the list could not be exhaustive.

- The Panel tried to overcome the limits imposed by a short data-collection period in Vienna by conducting additional in-depth interviews and focusing discussions on concrete examples, including in some cases by collecting anecdotal evidence.
- Given also that a self-assessment by the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch was commencing when the Panel started its review, it was not yet available to support the peer review. Therefore, the PR conclusions can only be understood as a comprehensive snapshot of the current situation and are limited in scope.
- Because of the very nature of PR exercises, not all dimensions of the research function could be assessed within this framework. The PR findings thus complement those of the in-depth cluster evaluation of UNODC global research projects conducted in parallel.

Structure of the assessment

After an overview of UNODC research function, this report presents an assessment of the current situation related to the five main dimensions of UNODC research. Each assessment section is driven by an overarching question that applies in a transversal way the core criteria as defined in the annexed normative framework. The Panel review explores good practices and identifies specific limitations and constrains under each research dimension. The assessment covers the following dimensions:

- **Governance and institutional environment for research:** To what extent does the institutional environment (internal organization, policy framework, working procedures and conditions etc.) ensure that the research function is adequately equipped to guarantee the relevance, quality and impartiality of research services and outputs?
- **Visibility, relevance and use of UNODC research offer:** To what extent are UNODC research outputs and services (global and regional analytical reports, survey reports, methodological guidelines, statistical databases, technical assistance etc.) fit for purpose?
- **Research approach and quality safeguards:** Are there policies and mechanisms in place to ensure that UNODC research approaches and methods are in line with international research and ethics standards and contribute to the quality of research products?
- **Quality checks and reliability of data and analytical outputs:** To what extent do existing data collection, reporting and validation mechanisms ensure the highest level of accuracy of and confidence in the evidence and outputs produced? Do they safeguard the research findings from possible biases that might undermine their impartiality and reliability?
- **Collegiality and cooperation in research:** To what extent are the integration and coordination of research activities within UNODC (including with field offices) and between UNODC and external stakeholders (IO, civil society, academia) fruitful?

A final section concludes and synthesizes the assessment findings against the core criteria of relevance, credibility and impartiality. This section also proposes non-binding recommendations based on the strengths, challenges and possible opportunities identified by the assessment. These recommendations are directly addressed to the senior management of UNODC. Considering that peer review exercises aim at helping the reviewed organization to improve its services, the Panel hopes that its observations and suggestions would contribute to stimulate and inform internal discussions about the role, practices and mandate of research within UNODC.

THE RESEARCH FUNCTION IN UNODC, A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Research and trend analysis on drugs and crime constitute one of the three pillars of the UNODC work programme, as adopted by the UN General Assembly, along with its normative role as guardian of international conventions on drugs and crime, and its technical assistance to enhance the capacities of Member States to counteract illicit drugs, crime and terrorism (UNGA 2014). The **overall objective** of UNODC Sub-programme 6 on Research, trend analysis and forensics (2016-2017) of the UNGA Proposed Strategic Framework for the period 2016-2017 on “International drug control, crime and terrorism prevention and criminal justice” (programme 13) is to achieve “enhanced knowledge of thematic and cross-sectoral trends and issues for effective policy formulation, operational response and impact assessment, based on a sound understanding of drugs and crime issues”⁴. UNODC has adopted a policy-oriented approach to research, aiming to generate reliable evidence that can inform international debate and policies on drugs and crime issues, and underpin the development of UNODC national, regional and international interventions. Whereas MS constitute the main audience of UNODC research, practitioners in other international organizations, non-governmental organizations and academics are other important users.

The multiple **mandates for UNODC’s work in research**, trend analysis and forensics emanate from the drugs and crime conventions and a broad range of resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (CAC/COSP) and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC/COP).

UNODC’s *Thematic Programme on Research, Trend Analysis and Forensics* (2015-2016) provides an overall framework. UNODC aims to:

- Build a solid evidence base, knowledge and awareness on world drug and crime problems, in line with international research and ethics standards, to inform decision and policy making;
- Assist requesting countries with developing their scientific and forensic capacities as well as data collection processes related to drugs and crime;
- Develop international research standards in the field of statistics on drugs and crime and ensure quality and consistency across all UNODC research outputs.

The Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB) within the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs (DPA) the main responsibility for the thematic programme implementation, for defining research standards and ensuring quality and consistency across all UNODC research and forensic science outputs. The research conducted at UNODC is of global reach and directed toward informing international policy-making n addressing global problems, particularly those of a transnational nature.

⁴ UNGA, Proposed Strategic Framework for the period 2016-2017, Part two: biennial programme plan, Programme 13 “International drug control, crime and terrorism prevention and criminal justice”, 23 feb.2014, A/69/6(prog.13)

RAB activities cover a **wide range of research services and tools** that can be broadly categorized as follows. This is not an exhaustive list. Moreover, several RAB outputs fall into multiple categories.

- Statistical data collection and production, including international data series on drugs, crime and criminal justice, in particular on drug use, seizures, drug prices and purity, homicide, Trafficking in Persons, drug-related crime. Most drugs and crime statistics are available on an Online Data Portal.
- Quantitative and qualitative thematic analysis: regular and ad-hoc studies of collected evidence that can be heterogeneous in nature. Studies can be global, regional or national.
- Research standards development such as methods, guidelines, manuals and tools to: i) support drug and crime data production and research at regional/national levels; ii) develop specific methods to be applied to phenomena such as spatial sampling frames and geo-statistical analysis for illicit crop monitoring; iii) harmonize statistics production across countries; and iv) provide scientific standards for forensic laboratories.
- Capacity-building activities for national drug laboratories, forensic science and research institutions, as well as national experts to enable them to set up drug monitoring systems, produce crime and criminal justice statistics, and report the information through mandated data reporting mechanisms.

RAB has set up a comprehensive data collection system, primarily based on five established data collection exercises⁵ where the data are provided by national, regional and international authorities or institutions in the context of special programmes or data-sharing agreements (including administrative data). UNODC also generates data; notably on cultivation and production of illicit crops through regular field surveys in joint data collections programmes with national governments. Open-source information (including primarily academic peer reviewed research, country administration websites and UN reports, and occasionally CSO websites and news reports) and scientific literature constitute secondary sources.

The collected data are analysed and disseminated through the following research outputs:

- Global and regional reports on drugs and crime issues including:
 - Regular reports: *World Drug Report*, published since 1997, the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, the *Global Study on Homicide* as well as the *Global Synthetic Drugs Assessment- Amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances*
 - Occasional reports on specific topics: *Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (global, 2010) and *Estimating illicit financial flows resulting from drug trafficking and other transnational organized crimes* (2011), regional reports such as *regional organized crime threat assessments*, *Global Afghan Opium Trade* and the *Illicit Drug Trade through South-Eastern Europe* (2014), and *Regional Assessments on synthetic drugs*.
- Research briefs focusing on specific topics or national experiences related to UNODC research areas, such as the *Global Smart Update*.
- Guidelines, Manuals and Standards notably on best practices in the forensic sciences

⁵ The Annual report questionnaires (ARQ), Individual drug seizures (IDS), Early warning advisory (EWA), Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (CTS), and Questionnaires on Trafficking in Persons (TiP)

- National Reports conducted jointly with a national entity, related to specific themes or surveys such as the Illicit crop cultivation monitoring surveys, surveys on drug use or experiences of corruption.
- Two journals: the *Bulletin on Narcotics* and the *Forum on Crime and Society*.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

To conduct its review, the Panel chose to apply the criteria of relevance, credibility and impartiality transversally to each facet of UNODC research (services and outputs, methodologies, working practices and environment). The Panel thus focused its assessment of the current situation around core questions as elaborated in the Introduction section.

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR RESEARCH

- ***To what extent does the institutional environment (internal organization, policy framework, working procedures and conditions etc.) ensure that the research function is adequately equipped to guarantee the relevance, quality and impartiality of research services and outputs?***

A well-established research function

The Panel acknowledges the recent management efforts to revamp the internal organization of the research function and embed research in a more coherent thematic framework. The recent restructuring of the Research Branch into five specialized units⁶ (from 4 units in the past) has brought greater coherence and complementarity between the different parts of RAB, in particular, a better division of work, coupling of expertise and articulation between analytical research and the Branch's forensics missions. Most of the interviewed non-RAB staff and external stakeholders welcome the restructuring as a good initiative: it is perceived to have contributed to better identify the research function within and outside the Office. Regarding human resources, satisfactory measures have been taken to ensure efficient and effective management of recruitment processes, to enhance the accountability of management, and to guarantee strong researcher profiles. More progress is needed to achieve gender balance⁷. The increased quality of human resources in the research function has been broadly recognized by MS and consulted partners and external stakeholders.

The role of RAB management and staff to ensure a consistent research approach across the different thematic areas and to foster a culture for research across the Office is to be underlined. The management decision to resume the development of a programmatic document based on the *Sub-programme 6 Research and Trend Analysis* on a more regular basis – a practice abandoned in past years - reflects the Branch's efforts to respond to its diverse mandates, and to the needs of its Governing Bodies and mandating authorities in a more coherent and consistent manner, while carrying out research in line with international scientific standards and defined principles. The adoption of the *2015-2016 Thematic Programme on Research, Trend Analysis and Forensic* establishes a successful precedent. It allows RAB to: i) attune mandated and emerging needs for research; ii) avoid duplication of research

⁶ Namely, the Crime Research Section (CRS), the Drug Research Section (DRS), the Laboratory and Scientific Section (LSS), the Data Development and Dissemination Unit (DDDU), and the Programme Development and Management Unit (PDMU).

⁷ OIOS Internal Audit Division, Report 2014/156, Audit of the recruitment process of UNODC, 29 December 2014; UNODC, Mid-term cluster In-Depth Evaluation of global research projects of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch, 2011-2017, December 2017.

work within the Office, and iii) reduce overlaps with other UN mandates (for example on crime research or health-related indicators of drug use). The *Programme* also sets out scientific quality principles and standard expected accomplishments and objectives for use in UNODC country, regional and global programming that contribute to the infusion of research activities and components throughout the Office's portfolio.

Yet, a research roadmap unguarded from political interference

The Panel finds that the UNODC research agenda has been expanding and that the roadmap is not specific enough for matching priorities with secure and adequate resources. The Thematic Programme formalizes the strategic missions of UNODC research that are drawn from its multiple, partly competing mandates. UNODC research mandates emanate from five different conventions on drugs, corruption and organized crime, and a broad range of specific resolutions by its governing and state parties bodies (UNGA, ECOSOC, CND, CCPCJ, CAC/COSP, CTOC/COP) or from ad hoc priority demands from donors or senior management. In this context, the harmonization of its missions into a fully-fledged strategic research agenda appears more challenging. The Panel observes that the development of UNODC research priorities build more on a pragmatic, responsive and tactical process than a reflective, ongoing and scientifically nurtured one.

Certainly, the priorities of MS as well as funding opportunities need to be considered when elaborating an international research agenda. Nevertheless, a research roadmap also ought to respond to scientific quandaries and include both some level of certainty and flexibility. This would enable the formulation of a vision with short, medium and longer-term research goals, with room for efforts to tackle emerging challenges and gaps in knowledge.

The Panel observes that unlike other UN entities conducting research, RAB does not benefit from an independent scientific or technical board/committee that could act as an advisory body to management and Governing Bodies in defining research priorities in line with policy needs, scientific interest and field concerns. As also underlined by a majority of interviewed stakeholders, including some MS, the delimitation of research priorities – and as a consequence the production of research outputs - could have lacked at times scientific consistency or not responded to pressing issues identified in the field or burning complexities that would have needed to be explore. They instead seem to be too closely tied to donors or senior management interests. For example, it remains uncertain whether the *World Wildlife Crime Report*, although perceived to be highly relevant and useful, will constitute a regular research of general interest or a one-off study. In comparison, a majority of MS, internal and external stakeholders regret that the *Global Study on Homicide* - could not be published on a more regular basis due to funding constraints, despite the considerable interest it has generated among a large majority of interviewed stakeholders. It is still one of the most downloaded research reports.

In this context, the Panel anticipates potential misuse of the ongoing discussions in recent FinGov meetings with regard to a concerted framing of UNODC research agenda. Several MS have stressed the importance of regular RAB reporting to FinGov on ongoing and planned activities to ensure better research programming and transparent selection of themes and publications, based on mandates. The Panel recognizes this as an additional route of dialogue between MS, donors and RAB that may encourage further stability and mutual accountability. However, such settings may also risk amplifying

the role of budgetary considerations in managing research programming and subsequent decisions (for example: scope and theme selections). In turn, it may also adversely affect the objectivity, scientific legitimacy and integrity of the research agenda. Whereas UNODC research intends to be global, offering FinGov members the opportunity to vote on the research agenda would risk having projects and needs vetoed on the basis of financial and political considerations rather than scientific ones. Considering also that the quality of research rests on the impartiality of researchers to follow international scientific standards from the earliest stages of the research process (from programming to research outputs including the framing of topics and questions), the Panel anticipates major risks of tilting an accountability mechanism into a tightly constraining one, reducing the existing space for original, research proposals.

A function facing insecure conditions that negatively impact on research continuity, quality and impartiality

The Panel found that the UNODC research function is not backed by a sound resource framework. Member States and external experts recognize that UNODC operates within a highly constraining environment. Amid growing expectations and vigorous international debate on some of the core thematic issues of UNODC, regular budget contributions have remained stagnant, while extra-budgetary resources have become more rigidly tied to donor priorities and capacities (ref: Mid Term Cluster Evaluation report). UNODC staff and some MS sense that there is an underestimation of the additional responsibilities, workload and resources required for managing and conducting quality and timely research, and a disconnect between the increasing demand for research and the resources made available. The highly fragile resourcing framework of RAB is putting one of the key mandates of UNODC at constant risk. The Panel's evidence shows that the increasing of earmarked, voluntary contributions affects the autonomy, independence and capacity of RAB. The unpredictable and volatile financial situation obliges RAB to constantly adjust its staffing practices (by reducing the ratio of staff with permanent contracts) and to align more closely research priorities to particular donor interests. Besides, the Panel notes that expanding responsibilities, notably with regards to SDGs implementation and monitoring, have not generated additional resources. This is perceived by some internal stakeholders as worrisome with regard to guaranteeing the quality and scope of the mandated tasks.

The Panel recognizes RAB efforts to develop “self-protection mechanisms” to cope with a shrinking resource base for core programmatic support but questions their sustainability and impact on implementation of research activities. On human resources, in order to maintain an adequate level of expertise, RAB staff time and responsibilities constantly rotate from one project to another according to the availability of funds, while their contracts remain largely precarious, with limited opportunities for career development. The recruitment of consultants with complementary expertise and skills has been a way to complete new demands and reduce the workload of already overwhelmed staff members. Regarding financing, RAB leveraged its capacities to attract project funding in order to ensure a minimum of sustainability. More than 40% of the RAB budget of 2016 was based on project funds, around 30% on regular budget and just a quarter on the general purpose fund. Besides the WDR and the elaboration of international standards, key research outputs such as GLOTIP, AOTP or ICCS are mainly, if not totally funded by project funds. This combination of global projects to ensure a minimum of sustained funds has proven not to be the most viable arrangement as the gains in accountability to

donors are being offset by losses in the coherence and efficiency of research development (ref: Mid-Term Cluster Evaluation report).

The Panel is further concerned about the vulnerabilities that the lack of predictable, stable core funding for research creates and the implications on research continuity, credibility and impartiality.

Lack of funds has compromised the continuity of acclaimed global products such as the *Global Study on Homicide*. This may threaten eventually the image and position of UNODC as the main institution able to produce credible and internationally demanded data and information on drugs and crime. It may also harm the Office's position or even reputation as a unique global authority in its fields. The imperative for resource mobilization *de facto* modifies RAB's expert role and responsibilities as it pushes the Branch to spend more time to justify and advocate for research proposals than to actually implement research projects and demonstrate the added-value of existing research. Finally, there is a real risk of subordinating research to fundraising and donor priorities rather than to the pressing needs and priorities on the ground as identified by experts and/or national practitioners in the field.

VISIBILITY, RELEVANCE AND USE OF UNODC RESEARCH SERVICES AND OUTPUTS

- ***To what extent are UNODC research products and services (global and regional analytical reports, survey reports, methodological guidelines, statistical databases, technical assistance etc.) fit for purpose and suited to the priorities and needs of its mandating authorities, target audiences and programmatic objectives of operational units within the Organization?***

UNODC as a unique global research authority on drugs and crime issues

The Panel found that UNODC research products and technical services constitute reference works for both its mandating authorities and external audiences. Interviews and web survey results demonstrate that UNODC research enjoys a high profile among its stakeholders and audiences. Respondents value UNODC for its long-standing expertise, its ability to “pull together and disseminate” knowledge, and to “make essential data accessible to all”. This appreciation is overwhelmingly shared among Member States as well as research partners and audiences, including other UN entities, regional organizations, civil society organizations and academia.

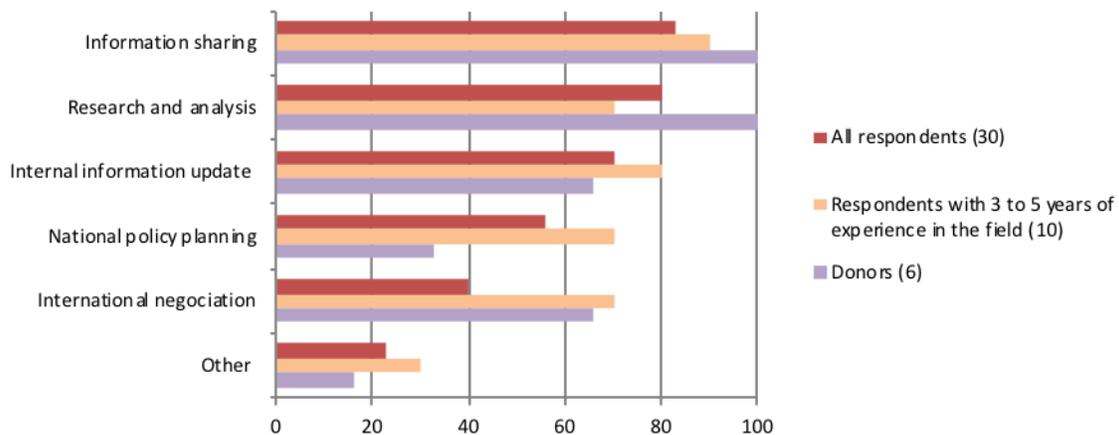
As an independent service organization to MS, UNODC is considered to be the best placed organization to gather and deliver reliable information and data on topics as sensitive as drugs and crime issues. The collection of data via official channels adds to the legitimacy and credibility of RAB which in turn enjoys a solid level of MS confidence in its professionalism, data quality standards and experience. Further, external stakeholders recognize that the UNODC research products are the unique selling point of UNODC for large shares of the global audience, while the operational aspects of its work are far lesser known. The regular references to UNODC research products in global media illustrate further the role of the Office as a global authority on drugs- and crime related data and information.

The knowledge broker of the international drug and crime policy-making community

Across the review tools, the Panel could observe that stakeholders strongly support UNODC in its role as an indispensable information broker and catalytic institution in developing a solid official evidence

basis upon which drug- and crime-related policies can be drawn, and in equipping governments with technical abilities (mainly through training activities and methodological guidelines) to apprehend drugs and crime phenomena. All interviewed stakeholders praise the “admirable”, “very useful” and “helpful” work of RAB “professional researchers” and the “strong networks” UNODC contributes to fostering among the global research community on drugs and crime issues. According to surveyed stakeholders, UNODC research is mostly used for “research and analysis”, “information sharing” and/or “internal information update”. The majority of survey respondents find that the specific themes addressed by UNODC researchers for its global reports (thematic chapter of WDR, the dedication of a global report to understudied phenomenon such as TIP and wildlife crime in particular) and produced outputs correspond well with their country or organizational needs.

**PR survey responses to the multiple choice question "for what purpose do you use UNODC data and/or publications?"
By types of respondents (percentages); multiple responses possible**



Among the seven types of outputs produced by UNODC, global analytical reports and drug and crime statistics are increasingly well known and identified as the most relevant and utilized ones, followed by methodological guidelines and standards (in particular the ICCS). Around a quarter of the survey respondents also find research briefs, national/thematic surveys and specific guidelines and manuals pertinent for their work. More than half of respondents report making regular and good use in their working practices of *transnational organized crime threat assessments, corruption surveys, and drug and crime statistics*. The regularity of trends on web page views and report downloads echo those findings. RAB web statistics show that between April 2015 and March 2017, the data portal has been the most viewed UNODC research page (followed by the WDR page and the *Global Study on Homicide* – a publication discontinued for funding issues since 2013). The WDR continues to be the most downloaded UNODC report, while GLOTIP 2014 was the 5th most downloaded document from the UNODC website (the 7th two years earlier).

The majority of consulted stakeholders highly valued technical assistance and support, and acknowledged UNODC’ essential role to further develop national and regional statistical systems, data collection methods, standards and good practices. In this context, it is recognized that involvement and experience in TA will help the programme, the beneficiaries and the individual staff, to better support future analytical and normative work and to use and tailor complex methodologies to that end.

Nevertheless, the TA offer from RAB seems uneven: several stakeholders shared their need for a better diffusion of technical services and closer collaboration with UNODC to adapt TA to their specific research needs. Yet, considering resource constraints and RAB's mandate on TA, it remains unclear how far TA could be extended and whether RAB's role in the design and provision of TA could exceed one of advisory and support. The example of supporting the development of SDG indicators related to drugs and crime, and specific measures to achieve their full implementation by 2030, was mentioned by consulted field and HQ staff as a good opportunity to pursue ongoing efforts while adopting a more balanced division of labour among UNODC units and national capacities to ensure optimized and tailored assistance. These findings echo those from the Mid Term Cluster evaluation.

Towards more user-friendly and easier- to-access research services and outputs, yet with room for improvement

The Panel notes RAB efforts to present statistics and analysis in a user-friendly, constructive and timely way, but observes increased demands for enhanced and diversified communication services.

Executive summaries, schemas, illustrative designs and online easy access to key findings are more systematically used for global report dissemination. The last WDR booklet format was particularly welcomed by consulted MS and stakeholders. The development of an online short voluntary questionnaire to collect feedback from users of global reports increases RAB's capacity to understand and respond to audience needs. The launches organized for the flagship global reports and the national launches of survey studies (illicit crop monitoring, in particular) are also perceived to ensure a didactic communication of key findings to main stakeholders (notably the WDR and the GLOTIP). Yet, some interviewees expressed the need to better align global report launch dates to policy events: the WDR, for example, is released in June, two months after the regular annual session of the CND. From a RAB staff perspective, it has been explained that shorter notes are prepared ahead of report preparations and serve as conference documents to inform CND and CCPCJ discussions⁸. Other consulted stakeholders encouraged the Office to diversify its communication channels (using the platforms of partners or regional initiatives, for instance) and to complement online diffusion of its research products with more decentralized launch events at national and regional levels. Also, the Panel finds that the new online data portal⁹ and research web platform enhance the usability and visibility of outputs, and the cross-fertilising of statistics used for different but related topics, while ensuring the transparency of produced data. So far, although the PR survey results show that a majority of users are "mostly satisfied" with the platform, interviewed stakeholders attest that the online data portal can be complex to navigate at times and need further improvements.

RAB responsiveness to emerging needs fuels UNODC research relevance and credibility

⁸ Inter alia for the CND, reports of the Secretariat on the world situation with regard to drug use, or to drug trafficking, problem focusing on illicit drug trafficking and related offences, or for the CCPCJ, the notes by the Secretariat on world crime trends and emerging issues and responses in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice

⁹ The new data portal currently being developed is composed of two major sections, one publicly accessible (data on drug seizures, use, per country etc.) and one password protected (inter alia, centralizing report pre-publication data). Before its launch in October 2016, online data and report dissemination through different "web sites" provided scarcely integrated data and a highly fragmented picture of the produced analysis (2016 Data portal concept note).

The capacity of the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB) to adapt to new demands and to proactively raise awareness on emerging challenges has been particularly welcomed by MS in recent years. UNODC response to MS requests to study emerging trends in drug trafficking - notably on synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances – as well as new forms of transnational organized crime illustrate these efforts. The two last WDR (2016 and 2017) were viewed as positive surprises by exploring the nexus of the drug problem with the sustainable development agenda and other forms of organized crime such as illicit financial flows, corruption and terrorism. In the crime field, following 2013-14 CCPCJ mandates, UNODC launched a new global programme on wildlife and forest crime (approved by ExCom in June 2014) to investigate trafficking in protected wild species of fauna and flora. It resulted in a unique global report on the topic (2016), praised by interviewed experts as providing a “fresh approach and innovative perspectives”.

In recent years, RAB has also been committed to aligning with international drug and crime policy evolutions. In the framework of the UNGASS debates on drugs, a large number of stakeholders pressed UNODC to expand its research scope to provide a more comprehensive and multifaceted picture of the world drug problem. Three areas have been distinguished in the run up to the UNGASS for more in-depth research: illicit drug use and consumption behaviours, drug policy impact (notably those of alternative responses to incarceration, and alternative development measures) and the structure and evolution of illicit markets. Interests included more research on the structural causes and consequences of drug and crime, notably the links with sustainable development, and those with other types of crime such as money-laundering, terrorism and changes in the supply of new psychoactive substances. UNODC has engaged in these debates, and has successfully partnered with WHO to develop additional indicators to measure drug use and integrate a more health-oriented approach to UNODC’s analytical work. RAB staff have also been co-sponsoring and participating in expert group meetings and events on these related topics, dedicated the last WDRs to drugs and sustainable development linkages and proposed a more policy-oriented analysis. Intensified exchanges with academia in the framework of global conferences fostered the choice of themes such as the nexus of drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime and terrorism, and led to the preparation of special issues of the *Bulletin on Narcotics*, notably on alternative development.

More specifically, the Panel sees the recent cooperation with the UN Statistical Commission on improving drug statistics as a reliability assurance and a sign of UNODC’s will to complement relevant expertise to service policy evolutions and MS needs. UNODC has been criticized for relying too much on law enforcement indicators. The outcome document of the April 2016 UNGASS on drugs further echoes the imperative of reliable, comparable, objective and quality statistics across all drug domains. Starting in 2014, RAB took the initiative to present a report on improving the quality and availability of drug statistics at the forty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2014/19) and engage with UN counterparts with a “fresh and useful vision” of statistical technical challenges and possible solutions. A large process has been pushed forward, in close collaboration with the Statistical Commission and other relevant UN entities such as WHO and UNDP. A roadmap was discussed in March 2017 with the UN

Statistical Commission to define priority areas for future work¹⁰. The global statistical community has welcomed the opportunity to engage with UNODC statistics experts to ensure coherence of the drug and crime related statistics with other development data, in the spirit of the integrated development perspective reflected by the SDGs.

In the framework of the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda highlights the relevance of UNODC's global mandates.

UNODC actively supported the design of the agenda and contributed to its contents through the technical support team for the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and within the framework of UN System Task Team Working Group on Monitoring and Indicators. UNODC statistics have proved to be highly relevant to monitor global trends related to SDG 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14-15, and 16¹¹, and more specifically to SDG 3.5 (prevention and treatment of substance abuse), SDG 5.2 (violence against women), SDG 11.7 (safe cities) and SDG target 15.7 (illegal wildlife products), and SDG 16, which identified UNODC as the lead or co-lead agency for compiling 17 statistical indicators, including the number of victims of human trafficking by sex, age and form of exploitation, homicide rate, pre-trial detention, etc. (see Annex 6). In this context, UNODC has engaged in promising work to improve the coverage of the SDG indicators under its responsibility (ex: ICCS, standardization of victimization surveys etc.), and develop new methodology (for example on firearms trafficking, illicit financial flows, undetected trafficking in persons victims). Additionally, the two recent WDRs linking the world drug problem with sustainable development issues are very good examples on the innovative character of UNODC and its capacity to contribute to global discussions related to drugs and crime. The Panel also welcomes the Office's efforts to apply a more gender-sensitive approach in the compilation and treatment of collected data (TiP, drug use, ICMP), the choice of study themes and analysis, and the development of output indicators. The Panel, however, observed that UNODC's efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in its work is not perceived as fully satisfactory by staff and experts.

Unexplored comparative advantage: rising calls for more in-depth analytical research

Certainly, and as underlined by the survey results, UNODC research serves stakeholders within working institutions and, depending on the function and missions of stakeholders, constitutes an

instrument to inform "national policy-planning" and "international negotiations" (see figure above). Statistics and global reports are particularly used for data referencing in national statistical work and for providing background evidence for local government and/or programme planning. More specifically, the documentation and reports prepared for meetings of the Governing Bodies represent good examples of direct inputs to policy-making processes. The usefulness of illicit crop surveys and national studies have also been lauded by consulted stakeholders. It has been reported that local governments rely very much

¹⁰ The road map contains a total of 16 objectives, each of which will require follow-up with the relevant international organizations, national experts in drug issues and national experts in statistics, and contributions from researchers and academics. These objectives include the establishment of national focal points on ARQ, the development of methodological guidelines on conducting population surveys on drug use, on monitoring the SDGs, as well as on drug cultivation and contributing factors and illicit financial flow deriving from the drug trade. The Roadmap has been examined in March 2017, at 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and "commended for the consideration of the CND to ensure harmonization with the policy directions of the CND and in this regard, encouraged collaboration between the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs" (E/2017/24E/CN.3/2017/35).

¹¹ E/CN.7/2016/CRP.1-E/CN.15/2016/CRP.1. More developments on that point are proposed in the partnering section of this report.

on the results of the illicit crop surveys and may be under considerable pressure as the results of this monitoring tool may influence their political standings.

However, there is a sense that the Office is not capitalizing enough on its capacities to increase its visibility and role as a global research authority to directly impact drug and crime-related policy making. In the crime field, for example, stakeholders identify opportunities for a global report on crime and justice to capitalize on UNODC's collected data sets, reduce duplication of studies, and advance the visibility of the Office in a field of proliferating research and replication of surveys (corruption surveys, human trafficking estimates, small arms surveys, private sector-led opinion polls etc.). Internally, it has been brought to the Panel's attention that UNODC research and data may constitute relevant baselines for following up on the implementation of standards and norms. Yet, exchanges of information and regular discussions remain limited between RAB and the Division for Treaty Affairs, charged with the Office's normative work. Externally, there is no consensus. A majority of consulted stakeholders, from both governmental and non-governmental organizations, call for more in-depth analytical research and encouraged RAB to exploit more qualitative materials and existing academic sources in order to provide a more nuanced and complete picture of the multifaceted phenomena under review and their evolution under different policy approaches. Socio-economic analysis, political economy analysis or the use of comparative methods have been pointed out as possible approaches to consider. Others underlined that research outputs need to provide only statistical, factual and descriptive information and should not deal with policy considerations that remain within the sovereign powers of MS. The divisions among interviewed stakeholders on the utility of the policy-implications section of the last WDR are highly significant.

The programmatic and policy usefulness of UNODC outputs would need to be strengthened for the Office to realize its potential as a knowledge organization that informs policy formulation on drugs and crime. Other intergovernmental, nongovernmental and/or national organizations are also producing useful statistical information and specific analytical studies on drug and crime issues (US/INL, EMCDDA, UNICRI, UNEP, GITOC etc.) that are receiving increased attention from donors and policy-makers. Considering the invaluable statistical and information material the Office is able to collect, the Panel found that UNODC is missing an opportunity to have a greater impact. Although UNODC constitutes a global reference on drugs and crime statistics, especially due to its comparative advantage of long-term consistent series and quality data collected from authoritative sources, the Office could have a more proactive role. The production of more in-depth analytical information and innovative policy analysis would strengthen UNODC's role in ensuring frontline knowledge to best feed into operational and policy programming and thus maximize research impact. Whereas UNODC is the only organization able to produce a reliable and trusted detailed picture of global drug- and crime-related phenomena, its relative conservatism in its research approach may place its added-value at risk (see Reliability of produced data section).

RESEARCH APPROACH AND QUALITY SAFEGUARDS

- ***Are there policies and mechanisms in place to ensure that UNODC research approaches and methods are in line with international research and ethics standards and contribute to the quality of research products (databases, survey reports, regional and global analytical reports, manuals)?***

A sound research ethic

UNODC's commitment to support UN data quality systems and reputation of objectivity is strong. At the UN system level, UNODC participates in the Committee on Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) to support the development of a global statistical system. Through the Committee, UNODC contributed to the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* approved by the UN General Assembly in January 2014, and advanced in-house the implementation of the *Principles Governing International Statistics Activities*¹² since their endorsement by UNODC in 2005. Following the call made by the Under Secretary General of UNDESA to all heads of UN agencies, the UNODC Executive Director recently signed the *Principles Governing International Statistics Activities*¹³ as a demonstration of UNODC's political commitment to these Principles.

At the organizational level, RAB's role to build a data quality culture in the Office's daily operations must be underscored. UNODC has demonstrated a clear commitment to strengthen the data quality culture not only at the specific level of RAB, but throughout the entire organization, and ensure methodological approaches and tools are rooted in a common data quality vision. The 2015-2016 Thematic Programme on research is grounded on specific "standards for UNODC research" to ensure the highest quality of processed and collected information, and of research outputs¹⁴. In 2012, RAB also developed an unprecedented explicit *Data Quality Policy*, providing a framework for data quality assurance at all stages of the statistical value chain, focusing on collecting, analyzing and disseminating processes. Besides, the Policy details the prerequisites for data quality (quality commitment, adequate resources, impartiality, existing mandates for data collection and cooperative relations with data providers), and sets confidentiality safeguards¹⁵ as well as an umbrella quality indicator framework that is reflected in those specifically designed for drug use, drug supply, drug management, crime prevalence and crime management statistics.

¹² Endorsed by all statistical departments of the UN Secretariat, specialized agencies, the World Bank, the OECD and other regional and international organizations.

¹³ The Principles were signed by UNODC Executive Director in May 2017 (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/unsystem/Endorsement/UNODC.pdf>) and are available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/statorg/principles_stat_activities/principles_stat_activities.pdf

¹⁴ It consists of the formulation of clear and relevant research questions within the mandated fields of research, well-designed and innovative methodologies, integrity and impartiality of research, accuracy of presentation of research outputs and promotion of cooperation in data collection processes.

¹⁵ These include legal confidentiality commitments on staff appointments, penalties for any wilful breaches of confidentiality, technological and organizational provisions to protect the security and integrity of sensitivity data, and strict protocols for external users' access to micro-data for research purposes.

The review has also clearly shown that RAB is eager to advance a result-oriented research function.

Although this Peer review constitutes a first opportunity to independently assess the function as a whole, numerous tools have been developed and used by the Branch to monitor research accomplishments and product adequacy for the targeted groups' needs and quality expectations. In addition to the annual reporting system common to the whole Office and to the all-UN performance indicators and evaluation mechanisms, in 2015-2016, RAB developed a set of *outcome-level standard indicators on research and trend analysis* for use in UNODC country, regional and global programmes¹⁶. RAB also set up voluntary questionnaires for global reports available online to collect indicative information on the nature of the receptions of its main flagged outputs. In addition, the mid-term in-depth cluster evaluation of five global research projects constitutes an additional evaluation tool to inform the future research work programme.

A robust and adaptive research policy that fuels UNODC products legitimacy and credibility

Throughout its assessment process, the Panel encountered positive feedback on UNODC's progress in the way data is collected and research methodologies developed and applied. There was an overall perception by internal and external stakeholders – including Member States – that data and research methodologies have improved and adapted to UN-wide standards, increasing the legitimacy and credibility of RABs products. More than half of survey respondents agreed that the “methodologies used by UNODC are transparent and tailored to address well-formulated research questions” and that the “evidence underpinning UNODC analytical research is robust enough to appreciate the complexity of researched phenomenon and topics”. UNODC analysis and research findings are also recognized as rigorously “based on solid and unbiased evidence”.

The Panel, along with most of the interviewed stakeholders, notes considerable improvements over the past few years in the transparency, credibility and adaptability of research methods and procedures.

- ***Transparency:*** UNODC discloses online the methods used for its different research products. Each publication comes with a methodology chapter that lays out the preferred empirical strategies used and their associated limitations. However, methodological considerations are not always accessible to non-specialized audiences. Some survey respondents encouraged more pedagogy from UNODC in this respect, and suggested to organize a seminar-type event for UNODC to explain its approach and discuss with MS counterparts the attached technical requirements and possible data limitations, with the view of managing MS expectations of produced results. The Panel would encourage such initiatives, provided that there is sufficient additional resources available to that end.
- ***Credibility:*** The inclusion of additional indicators beyond administrative and law enforcement measurements notably in the drug and TIP fields, as well as the increased place for scientific oversight, have been particularly welcome. Regarding quantitative information collection, RAB chiefs, in close cooperation with staff, have designed a set of supplemented norms and

¹⁶ These indicators are based on 6 main expected accomplishments, including enhanced access to knowledge to formulate strategic responses in relation to drugs and crime issues, increased capacity to produce and analyze data on trends and detect emerging issues and enhanced cooperation with and among relevant stakeholders in order to increase knowledge relating to drugs and crime.

guidelines to guide data collection processes and guarantee confidentiality of information. Notes to RAB staff, filing guidelines as well as *Guidelines for Sharing Microdata* (2015) determine the conditions under which research outputs and micro-data should be stored and how they can be shared, while ensuring: i) staff duty to adhere to the international fundamental principle of providing equal access to final research outputs and data disseminated by the Office to all users; and ii) staff ability to correct and/or explain data in case of misinterpretation or misuse; and iii) the anonymity of information sources is guaranteed to prevent any negative consequences for data providers (such as survey participants or national statisticians).

- **Adaptability:** In addition to the intrinsic challenges of the observed phenomena, differences in MS technical capacities, resources and field security conditions have an impact on the conduct of research and on the availability and quality of quantitative data. To overcome such challenges, RAB developed tailored working procedures in close cooperation with governments and specialized institutions (national offices of statistics, ministries, national research institutes etc). In the case of the illicit crop monitoring surveys and corruption surveys, memoranda of understanding, working agreements and technical proposals are designed and agreed beforehand between UNODC (as represented by its national/regional offices) and host governments. These instruments define the responsibilities and missions of each parties, set out the applicable ethical and scientific principles and frame the survey objectives, coverage and scope, sampling design, while delineating research instruments, fieldwork arrangements and timelines, levels for reporting data, and financial and operational arrangements. Issues of data ownership and dissemination are also considered ahead of the work, and technical supervision structures are created. In the delivery of technical and scientific support, all requests are contextualized so that they take into account specific geographic or substantive needs, the research and laboratory situation, and the staff skills in the respective country or region. According to interviews, these efforts have been welcomed as a way to enhance MS capacities to develop new types of data, apart from administrative records, as well as MS ownership of the information produced.

QUALITY CHECKS AND RELIABILITY OF PRODUCED DATA AND ANALYSIS

- ***To what extent do existing data collection, reporting and validation mechanisms ensure the highest level of accuracy of and confidence in produced evidence, and safeguard research findings from possible biases that might undermine their impartiality and reliability?***

A delicate and complex data collection process

This PR is not in a position to validate or invalidate UNODC research methodologies. Considering the complexity and sensitivity of the studies, existing methodologies and indicators used to detect and describe quantitatively global drug and crime threats are far from foolproof. The objective here is rather to: i) gauge UNODC's efforts to make sure that solid foundations exist for a broad comparability of data across different countries, as demanded by the substantive universality characterizing UNODC research outputs; and ii) identify existing breaches that may endanger the credibility of the findings.

The Panel notes the recent development of an explicit Data Quality Policy. In 2012, RAB developed an unprecedented, explicit *Data Quality Policy* that details the prerequisites to data quality (quality commitment, adequate resources, impartiality, existing mandates for data collection and cooperative relations with data providers) and sets confidentiality safeguards¹⁷ as well as an umbrella quality indicator framework that is reflected in those specifically designed for drug use, drug supply, drug management, crime prevalence and crime management statistics. General data quality checks are also defined to validate collected data¹⁸.

However, the Panel is concerned over the limited visibility and observed misuses of existing quality standards and procedures. The Panel found that Member States are not always aware of all the above-mentioned quality standards and that a not negligible share of consulted stakeholders declared to have observed some uncertainties and persistent problems in data reporting and validation systems. Although it is delicate to detail here the technical explanatory factors, the Panel has identified three interlinked issues that might enlighten those results:

- a general misunderstanding of existing reporting systems from data providers, notably on drugs;
- an overall reluctance at the higher management level to challenge collected official data and enlarge the sources of information used for UNODC research;
- a tendency to subordinate data and validation procedures to political considerations over research objectives.

Misunderstandings over global data reporting systems

Overall, through interviews and survey responses, the Panel sensed some confusion mainly from MS around the objective of standardizing data collection methods. Considerable differences persist in the quality and quantity of quantitative information shared by Member States for reasons ranging from a lack of primary data, poor reporting of existing information, and sometimes, a lack of commitment to transparent data sharing within the international community. In addition, the timing of data collection and publication cycles does not always allow RAB to provide a timely picture of global drug and crime threats. The Panel has therefore paid particular attention to UNODC efforts to harmonize and facilitate data reporting processes through data definition, methodological standardization and development of specific techniques of information collection. Several manuals on statistical classification and development¹⁹ are recognized as very useful, quality tools by consulted stakeholders (Annexes 4 and 5). TA such as providing technical support to conduct national surveys, encouraging systematic recording of court cases etc. are seen as positive RAB engagements to increase information production and data ownership. Time and financial constraints have tended to limit RAB's role in the provision of TA in the field. Regional offices, yet with reduced research staff play a leading implementation role while RAB acts more as a coordinator and advisor. In the case of illicit crop monitoring surveys, for example, the use of

¹⁷ These include legal confidentiality commitments on staff appointments, penalties for any wilful breaches of confidentiality, technological and organizational provisions to protect the security and integrity of sensitivity data, and strict protocols for external user access to micro-data for research purposes.

¹⁸ Including automatic arithmetic validations through on- or offline data collection tools; logical validations by the data management team through dialogue with data contributors; logical validations, by domain experts during the analysis phase of the data; validation against external sources on an ad hoc basis and subject to resource constraints; validation of the primary outputs drafts by the data contributors.

¹⁹ See for example *International classification of crimes for statistical purposes, Manual on victimization surveys, Juvenile Justice Indicators, Key epidemiological indicators of drug use.*

new technologies have helped to best locate existing illicit cultures but cannot be standardized in all contexts. However, it has been reported to the Panel that the harmonization of alternative methods of data collection such as surveys can be challenging for various reasons, including security conditions, costs and limited procurement choices. Although UNODC positions itself as an intermediary, some national institutions tend to be reluctant to contract third party organizations to train national focal points due to concerns about the confidentiality of the process.

More specifically, several issues have been associated with the way the six mandated reporting tools have been used, in particular the CTS and ARQ. First, for a large part of MS, ARQ although considered relevant, is seen as rather user-unfriendly, too detailed and challenging to complete. The formulation and complexity of questions, their scope and the attached control checks are perceived by some stakeholders to work against their purpose, and in turn to lower the level and/or quality of returned questionnaires. Second, the low response rate and the differences in geographical coverage it implies are considered problematic by the majority of consulted stakeholders. RAB has thus been overwhelmingly encouraged to identify means to reform the tool and make it easier to use. More than half of PR survey respondents identified “information sharing with MS” and “technical assistance” as central areas for future engagement. Interviewed MS and technical focal points strongly advocated for a comprehensive redesign of the ARQ. They echoed engagements at the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly on drugs in April 2016 (UNGASS) to strengthen relevant statistics and data collection tools in order to best picture emerging drug-related challenges. Internal and external stakeholders, including MS, strongly advocated for a technical review process of the ARQ tool so it can be better adapted to MS response capacities and best reflect the new dimensions and data identified at the 2016 UNGASS. Bearing in mind that the questionnaire design undergoes a negotiating process, the Panel stresses here the risks that such a process can easily lead to the perception of political interference and, therefore, reiterates the importance of keeping the reform discussion on a technical level. The Panel also notes that there is no other known example in the UN system where a questionnaire is negotiated. Thus the Panel welcomes the *expert* consultation held in Vienna during the fourth quarter of 2017 - and the dedicated concept note.

The Panel has identified additional issues surrounding the ARQ that would need to be taken into consideration in case the tool is reviewed and revised. First, the development of the ARQ seems to have followed an unusual path within the UN system that may put into question the objectivity and relevance of the tool. Although the objectives, scope and expected outcome of a mandated tool need to be agreed upon with the mandating authorities, the technical aspects - such as coverage and relevant measurement systems - need to be left to statisticians and experts from Member States to best align with scientific principles and standards. If reformed, such a division of labour would need to be taken into consideration. Second, the Panel found that much of the tool’s administration relies on a limited, direct dialogue between technical UNODC staff and national/field technical focal points and experts. The role given to intermediaries appears to pose some risks of misuse of the tool. The poor return rate of many MS has unexpectedly created incentives for others not to complete the questionnaire in full. It is feared that those who fully complete the questionnaire could be negatively sanctioned in a comparison between MS that do fully report and others that do not.

Besides, the limited space given to direct interactions between technical stakeholders and the prevailing of vertical channelling processes seem to have repercussions on the way data is shared and selected. Many stakeholders expressed concerns over the rising interference of political considerations in the data collection process, considering it to be a threat to the credibility and legitimacy of collected data and produced research in general, which can threaten the overall legitimacy and credibility of UNODC. Examples were quoted where the *World Drug Report* was heavily criticized by local policy stakeholders because of its low accuracy in terms of the use of certain drugs in some areas. This was explained as being due to the lack of use of competing evidence as well as poor reporting in the ARQ. In this context, the Panel also shares concerns over the risks of possible misunderstandings over the value of objective research (i.e. identifying problems, not ‘naming and shaming’).

Unbalanced information sources – risks to the scientific credibility of UNODC research

Stakeholders’ uncertainties related to UNODC methods are closely linked to the prevalence of quantitative methods of research in the drug and crime fields. Some stakeholders recognize that the UNODC research function may also be affected by the wider research environment. Criminology, for example, remains a young academic field, involving many disciplines where divisions exist. As such, UNODC’s contribution to this evolving discipline is still a learning process. Regarding drugs, the same applies, although the topic is approached from various angles, using different analytical perspectives. UNODC’s choice to adopt essentially a quantitative perspective has enabled the Office to provide a unique global mapping of the problem.

Now, as the problem has evolved alongside stakeholders’ ambitions to have a more comprehensive picture of the drug issue, a more holistic approach to the data collection process becomes increasingly important. Open-source information, scientific literature, and qualitative interviews with actors on the ground (experts, local practitioners, etc.), when validated and in line with international scientific standards, can constitute credible and reliable sources of information. RAB has demonstrated a strong will to undertake such endeavours. For example, the *World Wildlife Crime Report* and outputs from the Afghan Opiate Trade Project (AOTP), prepared jointly by the UNODC Country Office in Afghanistan and HQ. Since 2015, the AOTP research protocol has been based on both physical, statistical evidence as well as anonymous interviews. It is recognized by users as providing a more comprehensive picture, describing general tendencies and related issues rather than presenting only law enforcement data. Staff nevertheless recalled the reluctance of some MS over using unofficial data. This reluctance can be explained by the political sensitivity attached to the studied topics. National governments provide administrative records which reflect the State’s response to the problem whereas some alternative sources would rather focus on the magnitude or other facets (including policy effects) of the drug problem itself. Some MS fear that the triangulation of official data with other sources is used to question their policy responses rather than providing an evidence-basis to that end. In that regard, the Panel would like to emphasize the importance of triangulation of data in any research field. Limiting the scope of data sources over political considerations rather than credibility concerns endangers the scientific reliability and objectivity of UNODC research.

In this context, the Panel notes with great appreciation RAB’s efforts to improve the quality and credibility of the data and findings in its global reports through the gradual introduction of peer

review mechanisms. Scientific advisory committees composed of academic and international experts have been set up for leading UNODC global reports. Since 2015, a permanent scientific advisory committee has existed for the *World Drug Report* to offer guidance on methodologies, inform RAB about the latest relevant academic research and debates, and facilitate RAB access to the academic community. The committee is composed of a core group of specialized academics that give a 3-year commitment to contribute to the work of the committee (including one two-day meeting per year, review of draft report and findings; delivery of feedback face to face or in writing). Ad hoc Advisory Committees were also established for the production of the thematic chapters of the *World Drug Report* 2015 and 2016 which focused on alternative development and the SDGs respectively. On the basis of the WDR experience, a scientific advisory committee on wildlife crime was established in 2015, composed of 21 participants, including 12 external academics and research experts, to bring missing expertise on the topic to support RAB staff in their preparation of the 2016 report. Most recently, a Scientific Advisory Committee was established for the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, starting from its 2018 edition. Interviewed stakeholders as well as RAB staff value these initiatives as good practices that help increase both the quality and legitimacy of the global reports, in particular among academic and expert audiences.

Data validation processes opened to political interferences

The guidelines on the approval of UNODC publications depict unusually long and highly hierarchical practices that may have a negative impact on the UNODC research function. Although approval practices are in place to respond to perceived erroneous interpretation and possible misuse of statistics, the increased bureaucratic burden of this procedure is affecting the scientific objectivity of UNODC research as a whole. The Panel observed that staff time is dedicated more to data validation and reviewing than to data analysis. In addition, if pre-publication informative consultations are usual in the UN system, pre-publication authorizations practices involving MS diplomatic representations with regard to open-source information, qualitative data and possible interpretations of officially provided data are not common among UN entities, including the INCB. As has been observed and echoed by a large number of internal stakeholders, research partners and international organizations, such practices do not only delay publications and, thus, diminish their value, but also risk opening excessive space for political interference in the production of analysis that could, in turn, have a negative impact on the neutrality and relevance of research. The Panel has become convinced that the existing internal review mechanism for publications is not sustainable. It creates risks of a highly politicized environment for research and demonstrates a misunderstanding of the research function by some stakeholders. As such, it is not conducive to fulfilling the high standards of research and data quality imperative in the UN system.

COLLEGIALITY AND COOPERATION IN RESEARCH

- ***To what extent are the integration and coordination of research activities within UNODC (including with field offices) and between UNODC and external stakeholders (international organizations, civil society, academia) fruitful?***

Internal cooperation but limited synergies

RAB efforts to mainstream research throughout the Office and to conduct research in a collaborative fashion are manifest. The research output elaboration chain involves a wide range of in-house stakeholders, including field offices. For example, the Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section (DTA/OCB/HTMSS) and a range of field-based research staff work in close collaboration with the RAB Crime Research Section on the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, while the elaboration of the *World Drug Reports* - depending on the thematic chapter - often mobilizes experts across the Office, including the HIV-AIDS Section (DO/DHB/HAS), the Sustainable Livelihoods Unit (DO/DHB/SLU), the Justice Section (DO/JS) as well as research officers in field offices. Collaboration includes provision of data, analysis or information, drafting, formal comments, and informal consultations. The feedback by field offices on the quality and efficiency of coordination with RAB was overwhelmingly positive, praising the excellent receptivity and availability of RAB staff.

Nevertheless, the Panel found that internal coordination could be enhanced and streamlined. As some discussions revealed, the restructuring entailed multiple staff movements that may have generated some tensions. Some units outside of RAB regret that, although they are directly involved in various stages of RAB products, cross-branch involvement remains largely ad hoc. Stakeholders have also identified a lack of synergies that may hamper the exploitation of collected data across the house, and the development of joint outputs across board. Although there are many entry points to encourage internal cooperation, working cultures, limitations in mandates and resources prevent innovative and relevant research from being undertaken. The panel has identified the lack of a comprehensive vision for research and the related competitive funding efforts across UNODC as main obstacles for a more coherent and coordinated functioning of research within the organization, a situation that has also been criticized by Member States. This perception echoes the conclusion drawn by the OIOS (2013, 2016)²⁰ and the Mid Term Cluster Evaluation (2017). The lack of cooperation may also be driven by political interests. Some interviewees observed that the limitation of data exploitation may also result from a lack of political support from MS to mandate the Office to expand its substantive or geographical coverage to particularly sensitive topics.

HQ collaboration with regional and country office: a rich, but untapped potential

The Panel observed some misunderstandings between RAB in Vienna and UNODC field offices. Regional and country offices play key intermediary roles in collecting relevant and reliable data, identifying research needs and opportunities, and supporting TA and training implementation. They actively participate in the development of research partnerships in country, in the elaboration and implementation of survey tools and methods, and in data and information validation processes. Interpersonal relationships at country-level - also facilitated by RO and FO - are central to build mutual trust and achieve a collaborative pattern of work across the different fields of UNODC operations. Three sensitive issues have been identified:

²⁰ ECOSOC, Committee for Programme and Coordination, Evaluation of the UNODC, Report of the OIOS, 27 March 2013, E/AC.51/2013/4 and ECOSOC, Committee for Programme and Coordination, Triennial review of implementation of recommendations on the programme evaluation of UNODC, Report of the OIOS, 24 March 2016, E/AC.51/2016/4.

- Human resources: The recent reduction of regional and country research branches and staff, although it varied across offices, had important consequences for the research capacities in the field and on the construction of a collective field expertise available to RAB.
- Data quality policy: Bureaucratic exigencies and the data quality policy tend to limit HQ capacity to sponsor innovative research at the field level and to exploit information collected outside of existing data collection mechanisms (i.e. mostly official governmental sources). Examples of global reports being insufficiently precise about national realities have been raised by some interlocutors, including donors, and shared in survey responses. Examples of studies undertaken at the initiative of regional offices without prior planning or clearance with HQ were notably mentioned. As research validation exigencies are more constraining at the HQ level, such a practice raised some questions regarding the need to intensify coordination and planning between HQ and field offices in order to strengthen the quality across the board and enrich the evidence-base.
- Management architecture: from the regional office perspective, the HQ research branch is viewed as too centrally and hierarchically managed. According to interviewees, technical focal points at the field level would be very keen to decentralize the UNODC research process and to give a more pivotal role to UNODC field offices in research planning and the reporting of data. PR survey respondents also echoed the need to consolidate existing relationships to ensure that UNODC outputs better reflect field specificities. At the HQ level, the limits of coordination are also acknowledged; notably in data reporting follow-up with MS and research planning. Some stakeholders also felt that information-sharing practices with field offices could be ameliorated

Inherent challenges of cooperation with Member States

As responses from the survey and interviews show, UNODC's exclusive access to data and information from Member States contributes to the uniqueness of UNODC research and constitutes one of the main elements of the Office's added-value in comparison to other sources of knowledge on drugs and crime (other UN organizations, national statistics, academia etc.). The evidence underpinning UNODC analytical research relies upon a series of questionnaires administrated on a regular basis to all MS and the quality of responses provided. Special programmes, tailored methodologies and data-sharing agreements have also been designed to guarantee the highest data quality possible. UNODC has fostered a win-win relationship with MS. According to interviewees, while UNODC research highly depends on national data provision, UNODC statistics and analysis are also directly relevant and essential for policy design and national knowledge production in the domains of drugs and crime. For example, in the case of the Afghan Opium Survey, local authorities and the Afghan Ministry of Counter-Narcotics are key partners in data collection and national report drafting. Such practices increase national capacities to monitor trends and produce high-quality data, and are valued by concerned stakeholders as they enhance ownership of the knowledge produced. The INEGI experience - in close cooperation with the Government of Mexico - is further acknowledged by consulted stakeholders as an example of good practice of multilayered cooperation. The project relies on RAB's guidance and use of knowledge networks to support MS needs in the development of training and methods to improve data collection practices and capacities. It is foreseen that the Centre of Excellence becomes autonomous and has sufficient capacity to provide training to countries independently from UNODC HQ, and thus supports RAB in its capacity-building mission in the field.

However, the Panel noticed some fundamental difficulties intertwined to such an exclusive cooperative relationship with MSs. Despite improvements, inherent gaps in the availability and quality of national information persist, and place an increasing burden on both parties. As stated in the Thematic Programme and in this report's section on data collection mechanisms, the unavailability of data and discrepancies in national capacities to collect and report data on drugs and crime phenomenon (reduced number of indicators, absence of national reporting mechanisms, scarce statistics, lack of resources etc.) prevent the use of a steady flow of quality data by UNODC. As RAB staff brought to the Panel's attention, such discrepancies generate methodological concerns, notably with regard to the methods used to extrapolate and the possibilities to update the data that constitutes the evidence base for UNODC analysis. Concurrently, they shed light on the continuing need to consolidate UNODC's technical support to countries wishing to reinforce their national capacities in statistics and research.

Diversifying research partners: evidence of promising initiatives

The Panel observes successful examples of RAB efforts to cultivate collegiality with other UN entities, international and regional organizations. The cross-fertilization of data and joint research by RAB and external stakeholders are recognized as clearly increasing the credibility and legitimacy of RAB data and information. RAB has worked at installing a culture of information-sharing with several organizations that have relevant and complementary expertise, notably at the regional level, with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, and the African Union, and at the international level, in particular with UN-AIDS, WHO, WCO and more recently with UNDP, UNDESA and ILO. Most external stakeholders interviewed confirmed that they have fruitful interactions with RAB, and RAB staff highlighted how these interactions ensured that UNODC research products benefit from the relevant available expertise. For example, inter-agency cooperation between UNODC and EMCDDA accelerated the establishment of early warning systems; facilitating timely exchange of information on emerging new psychoactive substances.

A series of recent initiatives have proven to be promising in increasing collegiality and preventing duplication of research across the UN – a need that consulted MS, UN staff and partners also shared. Despite remaining data harmonization and duplication challenges across the UN, the Panel found that engaged stakeholders are overall satisfied with the joint initiatives and consider that interagency cooperation on the development of common estimates, notably on drugs, can become critical for UN monitoring and priority settings in this field. The UNODC/WHO collaboration constitutes a first example. In addition to its mandate to counter the world drug problem, WHO – through UNAIDS - encourages and intersects with RAB's work on injecting drug use. The two entities have mutually developed guidance for data collection on injecting drug users/HIV risks and preventive behaviour and elaborated joint estimates (UNODC-WHO-UNAIDS-WB) on persons who inject drugs and persons with HIV/HCV among persons who inject drugs. WHO and UNODC have further recently established an inter-agency technical coordination working group on drug epidemiology, with the aim of developing common terminology and estimates, and increasing data harmonization across different international and regional organizations. Most recently, the "S-O-S Initiative" (Stopping Overdoses Safely) was launched, aimed at enhancing opioid overdose prevention and building partnerships with relevant stakeholders worldwide to reduce preventable deaths due to opioid overdose. As part of this initiative, a multi-country study

under joint leadership is being developed to assess the feasibility of community-based naloxone provision, and the impact on health-related outcomes²¹ with the objective of supporting participating countries to scale up access to naloxone and overdose training. Such cooperation mechanisms create opportunities to increase research accuracy in line with global concerns and explore new, innovative areas of analysis.

UNODC's work on TiP provides another example of effective cross-UN collaboration to advance global knowledge on a misunderstood phenomenon. Since the adoption of the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish TiP, UNODC has been working with ILO to develop a complementary approach of data collection on this crime: UNODC concentrates on administrative and law enforcement data with ILO using survey tools and methods to establish prevalence beyond law enforcement. Since 2014, the two entities have become active partners in harmonizing common statistical (rather than legal) definitions and indicators for research on TiP for forced labour. More recently, UNODC and ILO have started the conceptualization of a joint programme to support countries to implement household surveys to estimate TiP for forced labour. Stakeholders acknowledge significant progress as more MS and other partners become engaged in the issue and support innovative measurement tools to assess TiP realities. Despite progress, few joint reports with other UN agencies are under consideration. Stakeholders raised concerns over: i) the need for political support to explore innovative methods; ii) the availability of resources; and iii) the competition bias - some themes/domains remaining the preserve of each organization.

Current collaborative structures have been reinforced in the framework of SDG monitoring and evaluation. In addition to existing indicators and review mechanisms that have been developed by UNODC over the years that can serve the SDG Agenda, UNODC and its partners have been developing a unified contribution to the SDG review process. UNODC is active in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to elaborate a global SDG indicator framework and is engaging with UN partners to that end. For example, UNODC and INEGI have been at the forefront of a global reflection on how to improve drug statistics to better assess all relevant aspects of the world drug problem, including those related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The submission of a Roadmap to the UN Statistical Commission in December 2016 elaborated in close consultation with the WCO, OAS-CICAD, EMCDDA and WHO to improve the availability and quality of drug statistics at the national, regional and international levels, is an example of efficient use of complementary expertise to serve both UNODC mandates and advance SDG monitoring. More specifically, UNODC research outputs (notably the WDR, GLOTIP, *World Wildlife Crime Report* etc.) are particularly relevant in relation to SDG target 3.5 (prevention and treatment of substance abuse), SDG target 5.2 (violence against women) and SDG target 15.7 (illegal wildlife products), and fully supports the achievement of SDG 16, which identified UNODC as the lead agency for compiling statistical indicators for a number of targets (Annex 6). RAB thus fully supports UNODC's work towards SDG implementation and monitoring. Nevertheless, current collaboration patterns are mainly dedicated to pointing out gaps in data collection systems. The next

²¹ Four project countries, with a high prevalence of opioid use, located in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, were included in the study, which is open for additional, interested countries to join with their own resources. In preparation of the study protocol, assessment visits to project countries were undertaken between June and September 2016. This was followed by an Expert Group Meeting in Vienna in December 2016 where the draft study protocol was discussed. Implementation of the study protocol began in the second half of 2017. See: UNODC/WHO "UNODC-WHO multi-site study on community management of opioid overdose, including emergency naloxone".

step of finding common, overarching methods based on existing measurement systems across the UN is under way. The Panel observes that the role UNODC can play in this context might be underestimated by MS. As seen in the UNGASS process and Outcome Document, the SDGs tend to be seen as a parallel and “mutually reinforcing” system to the UN drug control system, and not an integrated one. As such, it may limit UNODC’s leeway to lead an overarching, collaborative mechanism. .

Unexplored partnerships: UNODC relationships with the academia and civil society experts

The Panel welcomes UNODC’s recent initiatives to build a wider network of knowledge and reaching out to new scientific actors to improve the quality and reliability of produced data and to develop broad expert advisory networks. The creation of scientific advisory committees for global reports has been a welcome step in that direction. Efforts to expand the expertise base may also be mentioned here. UNODC has put in place regular national expert meetings in order to inform guidelines and elaborate manuals. For the ICCS, for instance, UNODC and its regional counterparts appointed leading global and national experts in the field to ensure that the tools fit the needs of a heterogeneous audience of practitioners operating in diverse criminal justice systems. A regional network of research officers is also being created within the Office thanks to a RAB initiative to designate research focal points in each regional office. This network is likely to make the collaboration between HQ and the field more fluid, but also to facilitate exchange of information and ideas.

From its discussions, the Panel nevertheless senses that RAB might be too cautious at times in relation to academia and non-governmental research centres. Unlike other UN entities, UNODC has not engaged in strong partnerships with academic research groups or developed multi-organizational research centres. External experts and consultants are contracted mainly to undertake specific pieces of work of limited scope and technical and/or analytical work remain totally driven by RAB. Partnerships with civil society organizations or academia remain limited in scope and partly informal. This can be explained by UNODC bureaucratic exigencies and quality standards regarding externally sourced information as well as researchers who display some reluctance over the use of non-official sources of information. This reluctance might be due to difficulties in verifying the validity of data and the underlying requirement to justify to MS references to alternative sources. This may at times become sterile and time-consuming processes.

RAB staff - along with several civil society experts, prominent researchers and some MS - expressed a strong will to collaborate further, in the view of strengthening peer-learning practices, enhancing the complementarities of the research produced, and nourishing UNODC analysis from different perspectives. In this respect, recent efforts to develop closer links with NGO stakeholders through the creation of scientific advisory committees for global reports on drugs, TiP and wildlife, by the development of an informal network of experts on corruption, TiP, and drug-related issues, and by the increased use of academic articles and think tank reports are noteworthy positive developments. RAB management is also keen to install more regular cooperation with academia to bring more innovative perspectives to RAB thinking and better position the Office within ongoing scientific debates on drug and crime issues. Increased partnerships with academics are also believed to enhance the visibility and scientific legitimacy of UNODC research.

CONCLUSIONS AGAINST CORE CRITERIA

On the basis of its assessment, the Panel concludes that:

- 1) UNODC research constitutes a global authority in the fields of drugs and crime. Its global reports, regional and thematic surveys and statistics are flagship, high-quality contributions and valuable sources of knowledge. The expertise and professionalism of RAB staff, in combination with the dynamism and responsiveness of RAB management guarantee that UNODC research outputs reflect the priorities of its MS and Governing Bodies and provide timely and essential evidence to inform policy-making processes. UNODC research outputs also raise awareness on pressing issues related to drugs and crime - including in the framework of the SDGs - and inform different policy debates and processes in the drug and crime domains (UNGASS in particular).
- 2) RAB has undertaken significant efforts to closely align UNODC research with international scientific standards. The setting up of scientific advisory committees for global reports, along with tighter cooperation with the UN Statistical Commission and close partnerships with UN-, or regional research-oriented institutions around common themes and interests are positive advancements. There are nevertheless some signs that dialogue with the international scientific community, including academia and civil society experts, could be strengthened. Joint research initiatives, especially in the context of the SDGs and in an environment of scarce resources, have the potential to increase the visibility and impact of UNODC's expertise in the long term.
- 3) The visibility of UNODC research has increased but there is still room for further improvements on the usability of data and research findings. Efforts have been made to disseminate research products in a timely and user-friendly way, notably through presentations to MS on the occasion of FinGov meetings, the regular provision of reports and notes to the CND and CCPCJ, and through online publications and data portals in more illustrative and easy-to-read formats. The availability and responsiveness of RAB staff to explain findings are also highly appreciated and welcomed by consulted MS, partners and colleagues. RAB's initiative to redesign its website and to survey the needs of the users of global reports demonstrate further its efforts to ameliorate research services and UNODC's image. Nevertheless, the data portal interface and global report formats have been found to be laborious to explore at times, especially in the case of specific information requests from the national level.
- 4) While UNODC research products provide necessary and relevant baseline information on trends and raise debates in the fields of drugs and crime, their impact on national policy-making is not clear and difficult to gauge. The review shows that the themes and scope of research outputs are insufficiently linked to field concerns and tend to lack adequate, in-depth analysis to be used in the programming of UNODC operational activities and in national policy-making. The Panel's understanding is that this may be linked to the extreme cautiousness of UNODC to provide more qualitative information and to engage in any policy analysis. It also relates to the reluctance to

supplement the available official data sources (i.e. mandated questionnaires, national statistics etc.) with other scientific information sources (scientific literature, academic research or specialized expertise). This implies a certain limit to UNODC's research credibility and impartiality.

- 5) RAB's technical services are highly valued but remain too limited and under-resourced to fully respond to beneficiaries' increasing demand. In a resource-constrained environment, there might be a need to review the scope of the potential TA portfolio and to determine if RAB is the best placed unit within UNODC to lead the implementation of TA activities related to research. Organizational and financial arrangements – in particular, the role of field offices and other operational units - will need to be tailored accordingly.
- 6) There is a need to improve the data collection process, starting with its main mandated tools (ARQ in particular) and including MS response rate. First, the gap between the complexity of the questionnaires – notably the ARQ – and the capacity discrepancies between countries demand a revision of that tool. In parallel, there is a need to simplify the tool and to make the collection process more fluid. To that end, the role of field offices could be strengthened. It is also imperative for MS and RAB, along with UNODC senior management, to identify innovative ways to improve MS response rate and foster political will to do so. Second, the politicization of this tool - from its drafting through a political negotiated process to its completion through the intermediation of MS diplomatic representation in Vienna – presents a high risk of affecting the credibility and impartiality of UNODC research. There is a need to create greater space for national technical focal points and UNODC field research officers in data collection processes in order to buffer the possible impact of political interference.
- 7) RAB is effectively developing cooperative models with specialized UN, regional and national organizations in the production of data and reports. This work follows the best practices of collaborative, complementary work with WHO on drug use and HIV, EMCDDA on drug seizures, as well as the examples of productive partnerships with governmental authorities in Afghanistan on illicit crop monitoring and in Mexico to improve capacity-building in data collection. There is nevertheless an overall perception that tighter relationships are needed with UNODC field offices, academia and civil society research organizations. There is also the impression - notably among external stakeholders - that these partnerships are not developed in a systematic and strategic manner, and that opportunities for joint, mutually reinforcing research are missed. The SDGs and also the UNGASS frameworks offer increased opportunities to expand partnerships and transform existing collaborative experiences into more synergic and systematic patterns. The recent ties built with the UN Statistical Commission to improve drug indicators and work towards a more coherent UN monitoring system for the SDGs send good signals.
- 8) The development of the Thematic Programme positively contributes to harmonize the multiple UNODC research mandates under a coherent and sound roadmap. However, financial and political considerations tend to leave the research agenda open to donors' priorities, MS political pressure and senior management anxiety to report on mandates stemming from the

UNODC Governing Bodies. In this context, field needs, emerging phenomena on the ground in the drug and crime disciplines can be overshadowed. Several consulted stakeholders, including a number of MS, consider this situation to be highly unsatisfactory and detrimental to long term strategic planning. Although continuous consultation with MS is necessary to collegially decide on UNODC's broad research orientation, the design of relevant, transparent and credible research priorities remains a technical and scientific process that would demand a larger role for UNODC research experts both at HQ and at the field level. A long-term, strategic and strong vision for research appears necessary to improve the design of the Thematic Programme and research priorities for the next phase. It is also crucial for UNODC and MS not to transform existing accountability and dialogue mechanisms such as FinGov discussions into tacit control instruments that risk to strongly undermine the credibility of UNODC research.

- 9) The highly resource-constrained environment has created unhealthy internal competition for funds, negative prospects for staff and 'silos' within the Office. This situation has also tended to subsume field and scientific research needs to donors' funding priorities. The absence of core funding for UNODC research projects, including for its flagship reports, threatens the continuity, impartiality and quality of research and in the longer term, can harm the reputation of UNODC as a global knowledge broker on drugs and crime.
- 10) The progressive development of a conservative approach to research throughout the Office is also to be noted. This seems to make the research process more vulnerable to political interference, putting at risk the objectivity and impartiality of research, and installing some level of self-censorship in the choice of research themes, issues and collected material. Such practices may in turn fuel misunderstandings over the role, objectives and utility of research. Such conservatism and reluctance to innovative, risk-taking research are clear obstacles to the development of an appropriate and enabling environment for credible and impartial research.

Proposed recommendations

Understanding of stakeholders' needs

Replicate best practices (scientific steering committees, nationally-led/owned research centres such as CoE etc.) and appreciated publications (for example, threat assessments, *Global Study on Homicide*, thematic chapters of global reports).

To help streamline the research agenda setting, consolidate a communication channel with field offices and national technical focal points in addition to PM. The recent establishment of a UNODC regional liaison research network can be a useful tool to that end.

Considering the diversity of the audiences for UNODC research (MS, international organizations, academia, civil society etc.), manage expectations by rationalizing the research offer according to stakeholders' needs and available resources. For example, the publication of global reports every two years (with an annual update along the lines of the reports and notes provided to the Commissions) could free up resources (time and funds) to engage in more analytical, thematic studies for which demand is increasing.

Scientific credibility of data collection and report production

Re-equilibrate the range of sources that form the basis of UNODC research and data collection towards more qualitative material and scientific literature or expertise.

Consolidate the standardization of data reporting systems: establish agreed requirements for estimates that all stakeholders can follow and encourage the use of existing guidelines and manuals.

Maintain issue-specific scientific advisory groups in the long term and formalize the establishment and functions of such groups to install a dynamic peer-review and peer-learning culture to increase the scientific legitimacy of UNODC research. Scientific advisory group could intervene early in the research design but also assume the role of independent, anonymous reviewers at the pre-publication stage. Linkages between such specialized groups and a broader scientific advisory committee could further benefit the Office in supporting research prioritization but also in steering a larger debate on research findings.

Data reporting mechanisms and tools

Increase participation of MS in data collection tools through a dialogue on the importance and instruction on the use of the tools and ask for support by senior management to reiterate the necessity of increased response rate.

Strengthen cooperation with regional and country offices to follow up on data reporting mechanism administration and standards utilization.

Simplify data collection questionnaires - notably the ARQ - and other tools as relevant, alongside scientific standards and in close consultation with national technical focal points and UNODC regional/country office to best fit the knowledge needs and technical capacities.

Refine measurement indicators on drug and crime to provide a complete, multi-faceted picture of the studied phenomenon, and build confidence with MS on mixed methodological approach.

Rethink the role of RAB on TA to enhance capacity-building activities, in cooperation with regional and country offices or any other relevant units, for national technical focal points to improve data quality. Encourage an internal discussion on how to improve the resource and work model to that end (staff capacity, possibilities of partnerships, resources etc.).

Placing UNODC at the forefront of UN research

Strengthen collaboration among UN entities and where relevant with regional entities specialized in drugs and crime to harmonize data and methods to avoid duplication and further develop common sets of indicators and measurement systems.

Encourage the development and shared use among UN entities of online automated reporting tools for data collection.

Increase cooperative models with other UN entities and/or national research institutes in the production of joint reports and studies, following best practices experiences with WHO and INEGI.

Consider the SDG framework as an overarching process to consolidate UNODC partnerships, enhance its visibility and refine UNODC research relevance and utility to the global UN agenda.

Funding and optimization of resources

Centralize the fundraising efforts of RAB and other relevant units for research issues to avoid internal competition and lack of coordination. A programmatic approach to research could be useful to that end.

Encourage a multi-stakeholder discussion, open also to other global donors besides MS, to rethink the resource model dedicated to research and related capacity-building activities.

Balancing scientific exigencies with accountability mechanisms

Identify a better balance in the review process of RAB outputs between external expert committees, internal review channels and mandating authorities' pre-approval mechanisms. Scientific advisory

groups could play a critical role at this stage. Reconsider the practice to make reports available only to diplomatic representations before publication to maximize research impact.

Engage a discussion with senior management and MS to develop a shared vision for research to avoid multiple mandates and secure resources for quality research.

Establish an informal platform of dialogue and exchange with all relevant stakeholders, including academia, civil society and field experts, to discuss research needs, policy results and thematic priorities, and learn from a wide range of perspectives to increase the relevance and quality of research.

Refining an institutional vision for research

Systematize, in cooperation with MS, the development of an overarching programmatic document to optimize multiple mandates into a common actionable framework.

Consolidate existing internal coordination practices to cross-fertilize the use of data and information and inform the design of research priorities.

Organize a multi-stakeholder, autonomous dialogue around stakeholders' ambition for UNODC research after an all-RAB staff retreat has been convened on the same topic. Inform senior management of the conclusions to help refine the institutional vision for research.

Assemble, in close consultation with MS, an autonomous technical and scientific advisory board/steering committee with leading academics and experts in the drugs and crime fields to support RAB in determining common criteria that could serve as a baseline for UNODC research choices, and to inform research development.

Introduction

1. UNODC's Thematic Programme on Research, Trend Analysis and Forensics, 2015-2016 provides the overall framework for research and trend analysis at UNODC. The thematic programme covers UNODC outputs which are produced for research purposes. The Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB) has one of the principal responsibilities for the thematic programme, but other UNODC offices are directly involved in the areas covered by the programme, particularly the implementation of national and regional research and forensic programmes, which are carried out by UNODC field offices. When not directly involved in undertaking research or implementing forensic capacity building initiatives, RAB has overall responsibility for defining research standards and ensuring quality and consistency across all UNODC research and forensic science products.

2. Since the implementation period of the current Thematic Programme is ending, it is proposed to conduct a peer review of the research function of RAB with the aim of ensuring that the research function is fully fit for purpose and matched to UNODC's evolving approach. Peer reviews have proven to be an important tool for international co-operation and progress, in a variety of policy fields. It is seen here as potentially providing multiple benefits (transparency and accountability, consistency and coherence, credibility and exemplarity), promoting effectiveness (sharing best practices) and resource efficiency ('simply good business'). Peer reviewing focuses on best practices, achievements and potential progress and relies on mutual trust among peers and confidence in the peer review process. Review reports include factual evidence, independent assessment and non-binding recommendations.

3. The Peer Review will focus on the methods and approach used in the development of UNODC research products and their dissemination practices, looking at issues related to research methodology, quality assurance and cooperation with Member States. It will assess relevance, accuracy, impartiality, and accessibility of UNODC research and will assess how UNODC implements international ethical research standards such as the Principles Governing International Statistics. Undertaking research in a United Nations environment carries peculiar challenges because in addition to meet universal research standards as any research institute, UN research needs to bring a value added to the inter-governmental work and therefore it needs to be embraced and accepted by member states as a unique source of impartial factual information. It is this unique characteristic that makes a peer review more appropriate for evaluating UNODC research.

4. The Peer Review will be conducted in parallel to an in-depth project cluster evaluation of five of the main research projects implemented by the UNODC research branch to deliver the most visible global, regional and national research outputs such as the World Drug Report, the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, the Global Report on Wildlife Crime, and the reports related to the Afghan Opiate Trade Programme. The in-depth project cluster evaluation will also cover the project supporting the UNODC-INEGI Center of Excellence on Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics given the crucial role that the Center is playing in the implementation of capacity building activities on crime statistics. The Peer Review will cover the social science research part of the Thematic Programme because the forensics part has recently been evaluated through the in depth cluster evaluation of the two projects related to the scientific forensic field, i.e. the Global Scientific and Forensic Services Programme (GLO54) and the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends Programme (GLOJ88). In consolidating the findings of the Peer Review and the cluster evaluation, the results of the recent cluster evaluation of the

two forensics projects will be also considered.

5. The Peer Review Panel will include: the Director of the UN Statistics Division, the Director of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Center and the Head of Project, Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development (GPDPD), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). This composition will ensure that different perspectives of the research process (from data to analysis) are taken into account, as well as the different perspectives of national and international organizations.

6. The primary audiences for the Peer Review are Senior Management and Member States (Open-ended Working group on Governance and Finance/FinGov, Commission on Narcotic Drugs/CND and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice/CCCPJ), as well as the research branch itself. The Peer Review report will be presented to the Executive Director, the Executive Committee²² and FINGOV, and proactively discussed within UNODC.

7. The Peer Review Panel will focus on how the research function is currently implemented by UNODC, given its corporate objectives, organizational arrangements and financial situation. It is anticipated that the added value of the Peer Review will specifically be in the area of research ethics. While the adequacy of existing financial and human resources to reach the highest standards of research may be commented upon, it will not be in the scope of the peer review to look into administrative issues and/or present options to change the current level of human and financial resources. The Peer Review report will provide UNODC management with an independent assessment of **how** UNODC undertakes research and possible suggestions for its improvement. Recommendations made by the peer-review will be used to stimulate an internal discussion on the subject and will not be binding for the Organization. Recommendations of the peer review will be presented to Governing Bodies together with a Senior Management Response.

8. This document sets out the Terms of Reference for the Professional Peer Review of the research function of UNODC, as outlined in the Thematic Programme. It describes the background and rationale for the Peer Review, its purpose, scope, general approach, methods, time schedule and funding arrangements. The document has been shared with senior UNODC Management for inputs.

Background

9. Dating back to the establishment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in 1946, UNODC has had considerable experience on data collection and analysis that reflects its pre-eminence in the fields of research, trend analysis and forensic science. The research conducted at UNODC is characterized both by its global reach and by its substantive universality in addressing global problems, particularly those of a transnational nature. This in turn provides the foundation for the broad comparability of collected data across different countries.

10. UNODC performs its research in a cooperative fashion, building and expanding upon regional and international partnerships, interactions and cooperation in the collection, analysis and dissemination of information. UNODC research seeks to be factually and evidence-based, credible, trustworthy, relevant and useful. Avoiding any bias, it is conducted in a transparent manner in accordance with fundamental principles of integrity and neutrality.

11. UNODC is gradually introducing a system of peer review for its global reports to ensure that

²² The Executive Committee comprises UNODC Executive Director and D2-level Directors (4).

they meet the highest scientific standards and can benefit from best practices in the field. An Advisory Committee for example has been established for the production of the World Drug Report, its annual flagship publication. This Committee is composed by research experts who have decades of experience in analysing the drug problem.

12. The evidence underpinning UNODC analytical research is based on: i) four regular global data collection systems: Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ), Individual Database Seizures (IDS), Early Warning Advisory (EWA), United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (UN-CTS), and the Trafficking in Persons questionnaire; ii) information provided by national, regional and international authorities or institutions in the context of special programmes or data-sharing agreements; iii) reliable open-sourced information; and iv) scientific literature. The quality of UNODC data and qualitative evidence helps to ensure the relevance, accuracy, timeliness, coherence, comparability, accessibility and clarity of its research.

13. The external landscape has evolved significantly in the last five years. Peace and Security have become more prominent in the priority agenda of the UN. Issues which are the core of UNODC mandate such as violence, rule of law, access to justice, organized crime, illicit financial flows and corruption have been recognized as an integral part of the new development paradigm, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). These UN policy evolutions have implications for UNODC research which is expected to expand its reach to analyse its mandated areas in relation to social, economic and environmental development. UNODC has also been identified as the global custodian agency for a number of SDG indicators related to its areas of expertise which brings additional responsibilities on global data collection, standard settings and capacity building.

14. In the areas of UNODC's mandate, where the international architecture is changing, the UN Transformative Agenda calls for improved accountability and learning. Increased attention is being given to evaluation of crosscutting themes such as equity, human rights, gender equality, comprising the borderless dimensions of UNODC's mandate: drugs, crime and terrorism. Meanwhile, in the context of reduced resources, there is demand for greater attention to assessment of value for money and efficiency.

Purpose of the Peer Review

15. The Peer Review is taking place at a time of strategic change with significant implications for the research function. An independent Professional Peer Review will help UNODC to ensure that its research function is well positioned and equipped to make the best contribution to the work of the organization, and those it serves.

16. In line with this goal, the Peer Review will undertake an assessment of the independence, credibility and relevance of UNODC's research function, focusing on:

- a. **relevance** of the research programme to address the emerging trends on drugs and crime and to feed political and programmatic efforts within UNODC, its Governing Bodies and other regional and international processes;
- b. **quality** of research in relation to transparency of study design, methods, and procedures; balanced and objective approach; accuracy and comprehensiveness;
- c. **impartiality** of the research programme. In particular, to determine how the research programmes balance its objective to achieve quality and impartiality while ensuring national ownership;
- d. **effectiveness** of the implementation of the research programme and integration of the

- different programmes/projects;
- e. adherence to the **Fundamental principles of Official Statistics and the Principles of International Statistics**;
- f. **relevance and quality of UNODC assistance to countries** in relation to data collection and analysis on drugs and crime (to assess if the right institutions are targeted and if the assistance has a short and long term impact on people and institutions, to assess the quality of the assistance).

17. In this, the Peer Review will be coordinated closely with the in-depth cluster evaluation of research projects. The Peer review will address overarching issues related to methodology, credibility and policy relevance of UNODC research, while the cluster evaluation will analyse in details the effectiveness and efficiency of the research projects from a project management point of view. The design and implementation of the two assessment exercises will focus on achieving complementarity, as well as synergies.

18. Finally, the Peer Review will provide non-binding recommendations to the research function directly and to the Executive Director, Senior Management and Member States with the aim of improving the quality of UNODC's research function generally, and specifically to inform discussions and decisions about the role, positioning and mandate of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch.

Subject, Scope, and Limitations

19. The Peer Review of research functions is inspired by the peer review system established by the DAC-UNEG which established an agreed framework with a blend of standardized and flexible elements to reflect the diversity of UN organizations and their respective evaluation arrangements.

20. The overarching assessment question is: "Are the agency's research functions, methodology, its products and services: impartial; credible; accurate and useful for policy making, as assessed by a Panel of professional research peers against the principles set up in the UNODC Thematic Programme on Research, Trend Analysis and Forensics?"

21. The Peer Review will be carried applying three main criteria:²³

- A. Independence of the review. The peer review process should be impartial. This requires that the persons and entities undertaking the review are independent of those concerned with the UNODC research programme, to avoid possible bias or conflicts of interest.
- B. Credibility of the evaluators. The credibility of the peer review depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the process. Credibility requires that the review process is undertaken in a way to report successes, as well as failures. Recipient partners should, as a rule, fully participate in the review process in order to promote credibility and commitment on their side.
- C. Utility of the review process. To have an impact on decision-making, the findings of the review process must be perceived as credible, relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in research. Although, measures to ensure the utility of the review

²³ These criteria resemble the criteria established by UNEG for the evaluation function and products to be considered of high quality. See Footnote 1 and <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/945>

findings are only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers and member countries through their participation on Governing Bodies, in commissioning, receiving, and using the findings.

22. Furthermore, the criteria of impartiality and transparency will also be considered, as they are strongly related to the criteria of independence, credibility and utility. Impartiality is enabled by independence and is a fundamental element of the credibility of the review process. Transparency is another fundamental element of credibility and is an important basis for the utility of the review process.

23. Within this framework, the Peer review will analyse the main areas of focus and issues listed below. The research function in UNODC includes three broad areas: statistics (data collection, dissemination, survey implementation, statistical capacity building), analysis (production of regional and global analytical reports including flagship publications such as the World Drug Report, the Global Study on Homicide and the biannual Global report on Trafficking in Persons), and forensics. The scope of this peer review is limited to the first two areas of statistics and analysis, so “research” mentioned in the list below is to be interpreted as referring to both of these two areas.

- I. UNODC RESEARCH METHODOLOGY including:
 - a. responsibility for and safeguards in place for ensuring:
 - unbiased interpretation of the research findings
 - impartiality of the research process
 - transparency in the choices made when choosing different methodological approaches
 - transparency on the uncertainty around data and research findings
 - accessible documentation of the research process
 - adequate technical skills available for research within UNODC
 - methodology is tailored to address well formulated research questions
 - b. mechanisms to protect research funding from influence which might undermine the impartiality of UNODC research;
 - c. the extent to which UNODC research conforms with scientific research standards;
 - d. Identity of the research function within UNODC, including:
 - to what extent it is distinct from policy setting, advocacy and operational functions inside and outside UNODC;
 - to what extent UNODC policies affect the impartiality of UNODC research.
 - e. consistency of the research approach across the different thematic areas and between HQ and the field offices;
 - f. capacity to adopt innovative methodologies;
 - g. disclosure and dissemination policy for UNODC research products;
 - h. the role of Governing Bodies in governance and use, appreciation and understanding of the research function.
- II. QUALITY of UNODC research products (databases, survey reports, regional and global analytical reports, international standards), including the following:
 - i. The level of trust that internal and external stakeholders have in UNODC research products;
 - j. working procedures and internal organization of the research branch to ensure the highest level of quality;

- k. mechanisms and systems in place to:
 - ensure that research is accurate and timely
 - have easy access to all UNODC research products for internal and external stakeholders
 - l. mechanisms and systems in place to ensure that UNODC consistently apply the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities²⁴. In particular, to what extent UNODC:
 - has regular consultations with key users both inside and outside the relevant organisation to ascertain that their needs
 - compile and disseminate international statistics based on impartiality
 - provide equal access to statistics for all users
 - use strictly professional considerations for decisions on methodology, terminology and data presentation
 - make a clear distinction, in research publications, between statistical and analytical comments on the one hand and policy-prescriptive and advocacy comments on the other;
 - aims at continuously introducing methodological improvements and systems to manage and improve the quality and transparency of statistics;
 - enhance the professional level of staff by encouraging them to attend training courses, to do analytical work, to publish scientific papers and to participate in seminars and conferences;
 - facilitate the provision of data by countries;
 - undertake periodic review of statistical programmes to minimise the burden on data providers;
 - share collected data with other organisations and collecting data jointly where appropriate;
 - develop a framework describing methods and procedures to provide sets of anonymous micro-data for further analysis by bona fide researchers, maintaining the requirements of confidentiality;
 - respond to perceived erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics;
 - systematically involve national statistical offices and other national organisations for official statistics in the development of international statistical programmes, including the development and promulgation of methods, standards and good practices;
 - advise countries on implementation issues concerning international standards;
 - cooperate and share knowledge among international organisations and with countries and regions to further develop national and regional statistical systems.
- III. RELEVANCE of UNODC research, including consideration of the following:
- m. systems in place to choose research topics that:
 - reflect priorities of UNODC thematic, regional and national programmes and priorities of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice;
 - are based on research needs as mandated by UN inter-governmental bodies
 - n. to what extent UNODC research products (databases, survey reports, regional and global reports, international standards) are used by internal and external stakeholders;
 - o. to what extent single member states, the international communities, UNODC programmes,

²⁴http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/principles_stat_activities.htm

- and UNODC senior managers make policy and programmatic decisions based on UNODC research;
- p. the extent to which functional and organizational arrangements within UNODC contribute or obstruct the effective use of research products for programming and policy making;
- q. adequacy of UNODC research in providing knowledge on the most pressing and contemporary issues related to drugs and crime;
- r. to what extent UNODC research has a unique role as compared to other international organizations and research institutions;
- s. integration of research activities between HQ and field;
- t. effective coordination of research activities within UNODC and between UNODC and other international organizations;
- u. UNODC capacity building programme targeting right national institutions and addressing national needs

24. The Peer Review Panel will focus on how the research function is currently implemented by UNODC, given its corporate objectives, organizational arrangements and financial situation. It is anticipated that the added value of the Peer Review will specifically be in the area of research ethics. While the adequacy of existing financial and human resources to reach the highest standards of research may be commented upon, it will not be in the scope of the peer review to look into administrative issues and/or present options to change the current level of human and financial resources.

25. By necessity, a professional Peer Review is not a full-fledged evaluation that can comprehensively evaluate practices, processes, and outcomes in depth. Parallel to the peer review process there will be an in-depth cluster evaluation of the five projects which have underpinned most of the RAB work. This in-depth evaluation will be able to cover some of the issues which will not be addressed by the Peer Review. The Peer Review Panel will report on the limitations of its work. However, it is expected that the Panel will be resourceful, drawing on a solid methodology as well as on their own experience as statisticians, researchers and managers within and outside the UN system.

Approach, methods and tools

26. UNODC's Research and Trend Analysis Branch will assemble all necessary information to ensure a smooth work of the Panel. This will be supplemented by further information to be assembled by a consultant (who will also be part of the in-depth evaluation team), based on a review of relevant documentation from within and outside of UNODC. In consultation with the Peer Review Panel, the evaluation consultant will carry out a quality review of a sample of data and research reports, selected from research products related to the period 2013-2016. The sample will include data related to SDG indicators, reports which have a high and low number of downloads ensuring with an adequate representation of national, regional and global products. The Data Quality Assurance Framework (DQAF)²⁵ will be used to assess the quality of the data while universal research standards based on scientific methods will provide the framework to assess analytical outputs.

27. The evaluation consultant will undertake preliminary consultations with RAB and will gather relevant documentation and information. S/he will also design an anonymous web survey to gather information from a variety of stakeholders relevant to the topics listed above. These activities will provide the basis for a preliminary assessment, for the Peer Review Panel to discuss and use as a basis

²⁵ The Data Quality Assurance Framework is rooted in the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and grew out of the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), the IMF's initiatives on data dissemination.

for its direct and broader assessment.

28. The visit of the Peer Review Panel to UNODC Headquarters on 10-12 April 2017 will include a round of meetings, interviews and focus group discussions with UNODC staff at both HQ and field levels, senior management and Member States, at HQ or in capitals. During this visit, the Peer Review and RAB staff will also organize a Peer Exchange session, during which a few key issues of high relevance to UNODC research function will be discussed. Based on these activities, the Panel will prepare a draft report with the support of the evaluation consultant.

Reporting

29. The final report of the Peer Review Panel will present an overview and assessment of the UNODC research function and conclusions and recommendations for action. The report will be a maximum of 50 pages in length, supplemented by a short executive summary and annexes.

30. The Panel will first share its draft report with RAB to provide comments, suggestions and feedback on factual mistakes. Factual mistakes will be corrected, while other comments will be incorporated as considered appropriate. The Peer Review report will provide UNODC management with an independent assessment of **how** UNODC undertakes research and possible suggestions for its improvement. Recommendations made by the peer-review will be used to stimulate an internal discussion on the subject and will not be binding for the Organization. The final report will be submitted to the Executive Director, FinGov, and other inter-governmental fora as needed. Recommendations of the peer review will be presented to Governing Bodies together with a Senior Management Response. Taking into account their complementarity and synergies, it is foreseen that the results of the Peer Review will be presented jointly with the results of the in-depth cluster evaluation.

Responsibility of RAB

31. UNODC RAB will serve as the main contact point within UNODC for the Peer Review Panel and the evaluation consultant. The Independent Evaluation Unit will guide and oversee the process to ensure continuity and that synergies are used between the Peer Review and the evaluation.

32. The Office will provide requested information and data, including the following:

- Names and details of contact persons whom the Panel or its advisors wish to contact;
- Complete list of UNODC research outputs(2013-present);
- Description of UNODC activities related to capacity building in research (2013-present);
- List of persons to meet in the UNODC Senior Management and in Fin GOV;
- Access to all UNODC databases;

Documents to be consulted

- UNODC Thematic Programme on Research, Trend Analysis and Research
- RAB policy on data sharing
- Internal document on the treatment of confidential information
- Questionnaires used to collect data from Member States (ARQ, CTS, IDS, etc.)
- MoU and communication with other agencies on data collection
- MoUs signed with member states on the implementation of national surveys
- Research publications
- Results of feedback surveys related to global reports

Persons to meet or to contact (by advisor and/or Peer Panel Members)

- Chief of RAB and RAB Staff;
- The Executive Director or his representative and senior staff in UNODC, including Directors;
- UNODC Staff responsible for the different thematic programmes, results-based management, IT, and advocacy;
- Former research staff;
- Staff members in regional, sub-regional, and country offices to be interviewed through teleconferencing or Skype;
- Representatives of Permanent Missions in Vienna;
- Counterparts placed in capitals or within key national institutions to be interviewed through teleconferencing or Skype;
- Members of the Advisory Committee for the World Drug Report
- Prominent academics and staff of research institution in the field of drugs and crime
- Staff of regional and international organizations active in the research field of drugs and crime;

Peer review time-schedule and process

33. The Peer Review will begin in March 2017, and the Peer Review Panel will undertake formal visits to UNODC HQ in April 2017, providing a final report in June 2017. The presentation of the findings to the Executive Director and Member States will be done jointly with the results of the in-depth evaluation. Key findings and conclusions will be presented first to the Executive Director, UNODC Senior Management and subsequently to Member States.

34. The Peer Review process has five main phases (indicative timing is shown in brackets):
- i. Preparation (January – March 2017): Mobilization of the Panel and recruitment of the evaluation consultant;
 - ii. Fact-finding (March –May 2017);
 - iii. Visit by the Panel to UNODC HQ (April 2017); interviews with selected UNODC Members and staff of relevant UNODC units and Senior Management; analysis and triangulation of findings; preparation of draft report; this will include a Peer Exchange session between the Peer Review Panel and RAB staff.
 - iv. Report preparation (May-June 2017): the Panel will prepare its draft report and share an advanced version with RAB for comments and suggestions before finalizing it.
 - v. Submission of Final Report: June 2017.

Resources

35. The cost of the Peer Review will be covered by UNODC RAB projects, including:
- The participation of the Panel members (travel, DSA);
 - The costs of hiring the evaluation consultant;
 - Costs in UNODC (including in-kind contributions of staff time)

Panel Composition

36. Following consultations within UNODC a Peer Review Panel of professionals in the field of research has been assembled. A number of important considerations were taken into account when composing it:

- i. relevant professional experience;
- ii. independence: to avoid any potential or perceived conflict of interest or partiality, the Panel members do not have any close working relationship to UNODC that might influence the Panel's position and deliberations; and
- iii. institutional affiliations: members to be drawn from a variety of multilateral and bilateral development agencies.

37. The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of serving on the Panel resulted in the following composition (to be confirmed):

- Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the Statistics Division, DESA New York
- Ms. Sarah Cook, Director Research Innocenti Center;
- Mr. Daniel Brombacher, Head of Project, Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development (GPPD), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

38. The Panel will be assisted by the evaluation consultant responsible for (a) data collection and information gathering; (b) preliminary assessment of the collected information, and c) preparation of substantive inputs to the preliminary draft peer review report.

Annex 2 - Normative framework elaborated for this Peer Review

Criteria/ detailed questions	RELEVANCE The extent to which the research function is suited to the priorities and needs of the target groups (organization, MS, general audience)	UNEG Norms and Standards
Adequacy	To what extent do research activities and organization fit for purpose (strategic framework, management of research activities, evaluation of results)?	9,10,11,13
Accessibility	How are produced data and research disseminated and used by internal and external stakeholders (diffusion and communication, format, mechanisms for criticism etc.)?	2,14
Utility	To what extent are research products used by targeted groups and useful in meeting targeted users' needs?	2,3
Criteria/ detailed questions	CREDIBILITY The extent to which research activities are conducted in a professional and transparent way to ensure the quality of produced data and analysis	UNEG Norms and Standards
Accuracy	To what extent do research design and methods aim at the highest scientific research standards?	1, 3, 6, 10
Quality and reliability of data	To what extent are data collection methods and procedures objective and balanced enough for ensuring the highest accuracy possible of findings?	3, 12, 14
Flexibility	Is the research unit in a position to anticipate pressing issues and adapt to emerging demands?	8, 9, 11
Criteria/ detailed questions	IMPARTIALITY The extent to which research objectives are balanced and possible biases avoided	UNEG Norms and Standards
Confidentiality	Are mechanisms in place to ensure the protection and equal treatment of data and information reported?	3, 5, 6
Transparency	Is research conducted in a way to establish confidence in findings, enhance stakeholders' ownership and increase public accountability and credibility of the organization?	4, 5, 7
Integrity	To what extent is safeguarded an unbiased production of research data and analysis?	3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 14

Annex 3 - Evaluation tools

Annex 3.1 - List of documents consulted

1. UNODC Strategic Framework 2016-2017
2. UNODC Strategic Framework 2014-2015
3. Thematic programme on research, trend analysis and forensics (2015 – 2016)
4. RAB Organizational charts
5. Budget presentation to FINGOV meetings 2016
6. Guidelines for Sharing Microdata (2015)
7. Confidentiality note to RAB staff
8. UNODC Data Quality Policy (2012)
9. Summary Report of the Expert Meeting on Data Quality Assurance Frameworks (2011)
10. RAB Note on Filing System (2015)
11. Draft RAB Dissemination Concept Note (2016)
12. Report of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on an international road map to improve drug statistics (Statistical commission document) (2017)
13. Example of Grant Agreement, UNODC-INSTAT Albania (2010)
14. Example of MOU – Agreement between UNODC and Afghanistan Ministry of Counternarcotics on Survey data-sharing, Methodology and Publication Schedule (2016)
15. List of RAB publications 2013-2016
16. Inter-Office Memorandum, Guidance on the approval of UNODC publication, 2014
17. Pre-publication submission memo
18. Publication Submission memo
19. Flow chart for submission of publication to Executive Director step1
20. Flow chart for submission of publication to Executive Director step2
21. Report by the Secretariat - World situation with regard to drug abuse, CND 2017
22. Summary Report UNODC Wildlife Crime Scientific Advisory Group Meeting Vienna, 29-30 September 2015
23. Scientific Advisory Group for World Drug Report 2016 Participant list
24. TOR Scientific Advisory Committee on the World Drug Report
25. Scientific Advisory Group for World Drug Report 2016 Participant list
26. National Bureau on Statistic, National Survey on Corruption in Nigeria, Technical Proposal (2015)
27. TOR Task force on corruption measurement, Producing methodological guidelines on the measurement of corruption at national level
28. UNODC Peer review IEU Table for self-assessment
29. Independent In-Depth Cluster Evaluation of the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends Programme (GLOJ88) and the Global Scientific and Forensic Programme – Support Project (GLOU54) (2016)
30. Web statistic reports – 2017
31. Online Survey questionnaire WRD 2015
32. ECOSOC, Work of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the UNODC, reports 2014-2017
33. ECOSOC, Committee for Programme and Coordination, Evaluation of the UNODC, Report of the OIOS, 27 March 2013, E/AC.51/2013/4

34. ECOSOC, Committee for Programme and Coordination, Triennial review of implementation of recommendations on the programme evaluation of UNODC, Report of the OIOS, 24 March 2016, E/AC.51/2016/4
35. OIOS Internal Audit Division, Report 2014/156, Audit of the recruitment process of UNODC, 29 December 2014

Annex 3.2 – Indicative list of stakeholders consulted in the framework of the Peer review

UNODC

- Executive Director office
- Research and Trend Analysis Branch managers and staff, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs (DPA)
- Managers and staffs of relevant sections of Division for Operations (DO) notably the Drug Prevention and Health Branch (DHB); Division for Treaty Affairs (DTA), notably the Organized Crime and Illicit Trafficking Branch (OCB) and the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch (CEB)
- Regional office representatives for South East Asia and the Pacific, Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, West and Central Africa
- INEGI Center Mexico

Government partners and donors including Permanent Missions representatives in Vienna and national research and statistic focal points

UN entities and regional organizations:

- UNODC New York Liaison Office
- WHO
- UNICRI
- UN Rule of Law
- UNDP
- UNAIDS
- ILO
- CITES
- EMCDDA
- CICAD

Prominent academic researchers

Civil society organizations including,

- International Drug Policy Consortium
- Global Initiative on Transnational organized crime
- Small arms survey
- WWF

Annex 3.3 - Peer review Panel Visit Programme to UNODC HQ, Vienna, April 10-12, 2017

MONDAY 10 APRIL - Research and Trend Analysis Branch Focus: Methodologies, Quality Mechanisms and Identified Challenges

Time	Sessions
9h15-9h45	Introductory discussion: <i>Peer review objectives and rationale and the overall RAB research ethics and identified challenges.</i>
10h- 11h	Focus group discussion “RAB chiefs” : Decision-making and management of Research <i>This session will be an opportunity to :</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Examine thematic priorities and product policies, including the capacity to adapt and respond to emerging research issues;</i>➤ <i>Discuss systems of internal organization of work and impartiality of research;</i>➤ <i>Identify and discuss oversight mechanisms and quality checks.</i>
11h -11h40	Meeting with UNODC Executive Director: The added-value of UNODC research: Quality and Utility of research for inter-governmental work on drug and crime <i>In this session, the following issues are proposed for discussion :</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>The current state of the research department within UNODC and the importance of UNODC research for intergovernmental work on drug and crime.</i>➤ <i>The role and possible challenges facing UNODC research department, in a context of policy evolutions in the area of drugs and crime, and more broadly in the framework of the U.N. sustainable development agenda,</i>➤ <i>The Executive Director’s vision of UNODC research: opportunities and challenges within 5 to 10 years.</i>
14h – 17h30	Focus group discussions “RAB staff”: Research in practice <i>Discussions will be organized with Staff from the different sections of RAB to better apprehend research methodologies, practices and attached advantages and constraints. The following themes are proposed for discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Transparency and reliability issues in data collection processes;</i>➤ <i>Cooperation mechanisms with internal and external stakeholders;</i>➤ <i>The role of management and organizational arrangement.</i>

TUESDAY, 11 APRIL - Transversal research methodologies and cooperation mechanisms

Time	Sessions
10h – 11h	Interview session: Balancing internal cooperation and research needs. <i>This session will be dedicated to assess how far RAB research is suited for the needs of the organization and to what extent internal coordination mechanisms are efficient and useful for involved stakeholders. The use and relevance of research products in-house will also be discussed.</i>

11h30-13h **Interviews and Focus group discussion “Research and the field”: HQ and field research collaboration, a win-win interaction?**

This focus group will address multilevel participation in the research production process, notably through the example of survey work (drug use surveys, illicit crop monitoring survey, crime surveys) and TOC threat assessment work. Regional counterparts’ participation to data collection and research program development will be assessed, as well as the usefulness and reception of final research product. The session will also be an opportunity to review the relevance and performance of UNODC research capacity-building programmes.

14h30- 17h **Focus group discussion “Product elaboration chain”: Division of work and balancing of target group’s needs.**

This session will be an opportunity for an in-depth discussion with stakeholders involved in the development and dissemination of specific research products. Focus group discussions are organized per key products (World Drug Report, Homicide report, Corruption surveys, Global report on Trafficking in Persons) representing the main research themes of RAB and UNODC. The objectives are as followed:

- *To identify working and coordination procedures across the organization, and potential bottlenecks;*
- *To assess the consistency of research approach across themes and capacity to adopt innovative methodologies;*
- *To identify challenges in data collection and relationship with external data providers;*
- *To provide feedback on the relevance, credibility and impartiality of the research products.*

WEDNESDAY 12 APRIL - Member States Partners: Data generators and research receptors

The day will be dedicated to hearing feedbacks from Member States representative. In person open discussions with Permanent Mission representatives of countries who have been largely engaged in UNODC research processes will take place throughout the day. The questions of relevance and utility of research for Member States will be at the core of the discussion. Permanent delegations representatives will be asked to review the needs of capitals and assess to what extent UNODC research can be viewed as a unique source of impartial, factual information and critical analysis on drug and crime. The capacity of UNODC research function to adapt to pressing issues will also be discussed. The session will finally be an opportunity to apprehend the role, the level and nature of engagement of Member States in the elaboration of research and data collection processes. Issues of confidentiality and impartiality will be apprehended.

Annex 4 - Report on the Questionnaire Survey results

Among its assessment tools, the Peer review Panel designed a web survey to collect information on the level of appreciation of Member States regarding UNODC research working practices (cooperation, treatment of data etc.), products (use, relevance, quality), performances and services. The choice to restrict the sample of this survey to Member States stakeholders was driven by the plural nature of their role as data providers, primary audience of UNODC research products and practices, and data and analysis users. The results of this survey also inform the mid-term in-depth cluster evaluation of UNODC research projects.

The Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) administrated this survey. A list of 228 names was compiled with the support of the Research Branch (RAB) and IEU, gathering all Permanent mission representatives based in Vienna as well as Member states representatives in capitals identified as in-country data and research focal points. The survey has been opened online on May, 30th 2017 for a total of 20 business days, with a reminder sent on June 12th, 2017. 22 invitations bounced back due to errors. The questionnaire was available in English, French and Spanish.

Among the 206 recipients of the invitation to participate, 30 provided complete responses through the on-line tool. The survey was nevertheless started 42 times, but not finalised. Given the low level of responses (14.5%) and the limited size of the sample, the results detailed below are interpreted only as indicative.

The questionnaire included 4 types of questions: background closed questions (one option only, and multiple choices); ranking questions to gauge the usefulness of specific products; satisfaction question and agreement questions that required indicating the level of approbation or disapprobation with a statement about UNODC research quality and dissemination practices; and open-ended questions.

Table 1 - Scoring used for ranking and agreement questions

<i>Ranking questions of usefulness</i>	<i>Agreement questions</i>	<i>Satisfaction questions</i>
Not useful	Strongly agree	Totally satisfied
Less useful	Agree	Mostly satisfied
Useful	Undecided	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Very useful	Disagree	Mostly unsatisfied
Do not know	Strongly disagree	Totally unsatisfied
Not familiar with this publication	Do not know	Not familiar enough to respond

The results to this online web survey demonstrate important limitations:

- The perception bias: the questionnaire refers to stakeholders' own experience with UNODC research products and services. As such, the responses do not give full account of how UNODC data and analysis are used and may influence inter-governmental work on drugs and crime, notably in terms of policy impact.
- The level of representativeness: The Panel decided to delimit survey recipient list to Member States only in the view of gauging how far UNODC research function is perceived to fit for purpose as mandated by Member States. This survey provides a preliminary,

indicative assessment to be complemented by information gathered through a series of interviews with all relevant stakeholders, including Member States, international organisations, civil society organisations, academia, etc.

Findings²⁶

Respondents' profile

Among the 30 respondents, more than half (16 responses) declare to have a professional background in diplomacy, 6 in counter-narcotics institutions and 4 in statistics and in interior affairs. 6 respondents identify themselves as “donors”, while men represent 66% of the sample. Most of respondents are currently working in Europe (13), Latin America and the Caribbean (9), and Asia and the Pacific (6), while a few are also working in North America (1) and the Middle East (1). Participants appear to have a diversified expertise, managing multiple agendas and working on a wide range of fields related to drugs and crime domains (*table 2*).

Table 2 - Results to the background question: « in which of the following fields does your work relate to? Please choose all that apply” (in descending order)

<i>Proposed fields</i>	<i>Number of responses out of 30</i>
Drugs trafficking	18
Crime prevention	17
Drug prevention and treatment	15
Corruption	14
Criminal justice	14
Human trafficking and migrant smuggling	14
Money laundering	13
Other forms of organized crime and illicit trades (wildlife crime, cybercrime)	12
Alternative development	11

The sample gathers individuals with solid experience in the field of drugs and/or crime: a third have been working in those fields from 3 to 5 years and another third 10 years or more. 7 respondents are entering the fields with 1 to 3 years of working experience. Among “donors”, the majority of respondents have at least 3 years of working experience.

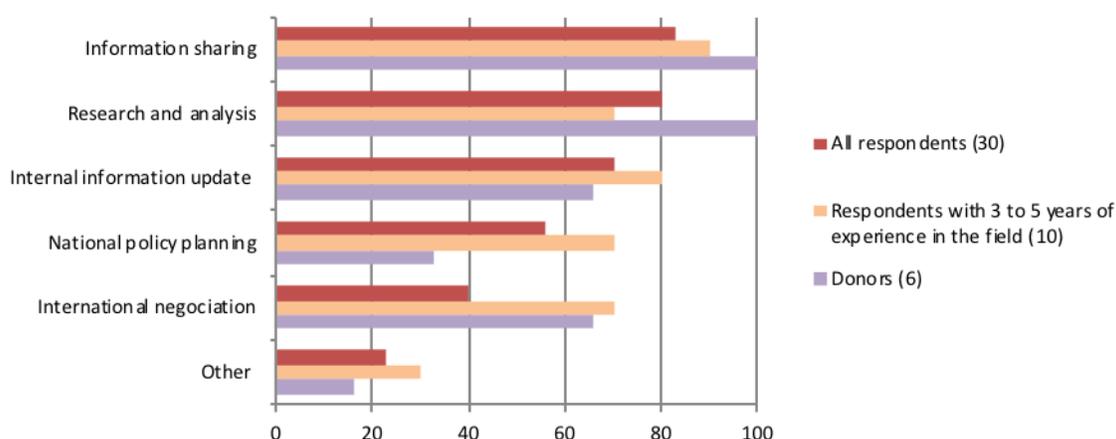
The most frequent declared role with regards to UNODC data and research productions is “users” of UNODC reports and studies (70%), statistics (46%) and surveys (33%). A majority of respondents are frequent users (43% are accessing UNODC research products and services “at least once per month”, 23% “once per week”), with a clear interest for products and services with a global focus (43%). Products with a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean region (36%) as well as on Asia and the Pacific (30%) and Europe (23%) drive also strong interests. These results might be yet influenced by the geographic origins and areas of specialization of the respondents. For instance, only 3 people placed “Africa” as their “primary regional focus when using UNODC research products and services”. This number must be put into perspective, considering that none of the respondents declared to be working in the African region.

²⁶ Considering the relatively small number of responses (30), mainly exact numbers of responses will be reported. .

Research products: uses and relevance

Results to the questionnaire demonstrate that UNODC is acknowledged a global authority and reference for research and statistical information on drugs and crime. UNODC research is further recognized to be serving as both, a source of knowledge and a tool supporting policy-making. UNODC data and/or publications are indeed mostly used for “research and analysis”, “information sharing” and/or “internal information update” within working institutions, but also, depending on the function and missions of the respondents, as instruments informing “national policy-planning” and “international negotiations” (figure 1). Per qualitative answers provided, other uses include also the identification of needs for technical assistance, data referencing in national statistical work and provision of guiding evidence for local government and/or program planning.

Figure 1 – Responses to the multiple choice question “for what purpose do you use UNODC data and/or publications?” by types of respondents (in percentage)



Among the seven types of outputs produced by UNODC, global analytical reports and drug and crime statistics are identified as the most relevant ones. Around a quarter of respondents also find research briefs, national/thematic surveys and specific guidelines and manuals pertinent productions for their work. Only 1 person chose research journals as significant. **All proposed publications²⁷ have been found “useful”²⁸ by respondents for their organization/country’s work.** Among them, the *World drug report*, the *Global report of Trafficking in Persons* and the *Illicit crop monitoring surveys* are rated “useful” or “very useful” by at least three thirds of respondents. More than half of respondents also declared to make good utilization of *transnational organized crime threat assessments*, *corruption surveys*, and *drug and crime statistics*. Nevertheless, drug use statistics triggers slightly greater interest than those related to the security dimensions of illicit, criminal activities (21 responses against 18 for drug seizures and crime statistics).

²⁷ To the question “How useful are the below UNODC research outputs for your organization/institute/etc.?”, the following outputs were proposed: World drug report, Global report of Trafficking in Persons, Global Study on Homicide, World Wildlife crime report, Illicit crop monitoring surveys, Corruption surveys, Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessments, Crime and Criminal Justice System statistics, Drug seizures and prices statistics, Drug use statistics, Reports prepared for the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) or the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), Manual on victimization surveys, Guidance for the measurement of drug treatment demand, International classification of crimes for statistical purposes.

²⁸ The term “useful” accounts for the number of “useful” and “very useful” responses.

Surprisingly enough, while the *Global study on Homicide* is one of the most downloaded publications of UNODC website, and the *World Wildlife crime report* considered one of the recent flagged reports, half of respondents declared “not to be familiar” or “not to know” these publications. Different elements may explain those results. The overrepresentation of diplomats in the sample, with general expertise on a wide range of subjects as well as the fact that both of these global reports address particular issues of the transnational organized crime agendas, are not part of a continued series of publication and as such target a specific expert and practitioner audience. As such they might be used on a less regular basis within Member States institutions. Besides, technical productions are directed to a smaller and more specialized audience, with 12 to 14 respondents asserting being “not familiar” with the *Manual on victimization surveys*, the *Guidance for the measurement of drug treatment demand*, and the *International classification of crimes for statistical purposes*.

Finally, it might be worth noting that the proposed options to the question “what type of research outputs do you find most relevant for your work? Please choose a maximum of two options” list UNODC products based on their online download and visit rate. The same design rationale prevailed for the selection of products proposed to measure the satisfaction of users of a pre-defined list of publications. In addition to expertise and the working field of each respondent, the diffusion, visibility and frequency of each proposed output may also be considered as a possible influencer of outputs relevance and usefulness rating results. That hypothesis may be checked against some of the comments given to the follow up question “how could the utility of the above outputs be further increased?” Some respondents explained they are “unfamiliar” with products that are however of interest for their work/country and suggest to fill that gap by extending outreach, diversifying dissemination channels (using regional platform for example) and enhancing communication at the country level.

Products and services quality

A set of questions focused on the quality and added value of UNODC research products and services²⁹. **Almost two thirds of respondents strongly acknowledged the quality and professionalism of UNODC research**, and agreed³⁰ with the following statement: “The quality of UNODC research products is anchored in the professional independence and accountability of its statisticians and researchers”. 23 participants expressed their satisfaction³¹ with the approach used by UNODC to interpret and analyze trends and to explore linkages in its research products (as presented in its global reports for example) as well as with the choices of specific themes by UNODC for its studies (thematic chapters for global reports, regional reports, and research briefs) and their substantive coverage. 6 to 7 said to be “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” and “familiar enough”. A similar proportion of respondents found the themes addressed by UNODC researchers to correspond with their country/organization needs.

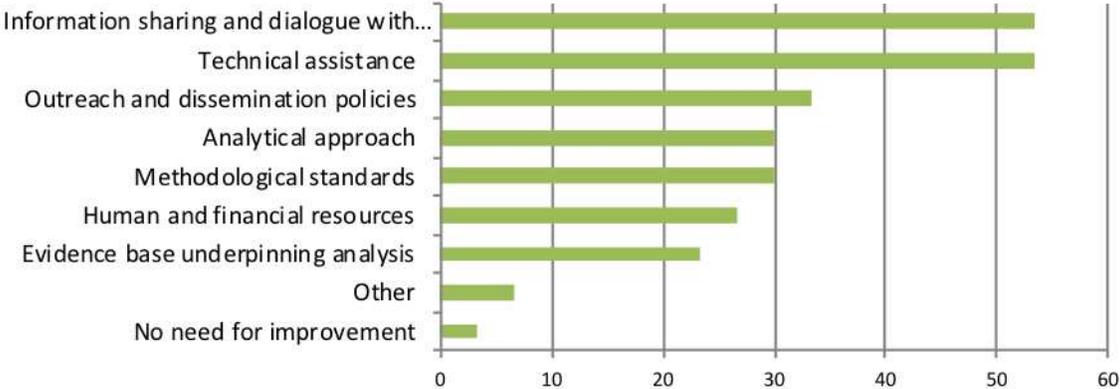
²⁹ To measure stakeholders’ perception of the quality and added value of UNODC research outputs and services, participants were given the opportunity to provide detailed comments, responses to multiple choice questions as well as to express their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to methodologies, professionalism and research practices. These statements have been drafted in line with the Standards for UNODC research as set in the Thematic Programme on Research, Trend, Analysis and Forensics 2015-2016, and with international ethical and quality research standards and characteristics.

³⁰ The term “agree” accounts for the number of “strongly agree” and “agree” responses.

³¹ As per the number of responses provided for “totally satisfied” and “mostly satisfied”.

More than half of respondents agree that the “methodologies used by UNODC are transparent and tailored to address well-formulated research questions” and that the “evidence underpinning UNODC analytical research is robust enough to appreciate the complexity of researched phenomenon and topics”. UNODC analysis and research findings are also recognized as rigorously “based on solid and unbiased evidence”. Nevertheless, around a quarter of respondents remain “undecided” on these above-cited statements and a few expressed their disagreement (between 1 to 2 respondents depending on the proposed statement and question). Although it is clear that no methods are fool proof, all the more in the field of study of illicit activities, it seems delicate to spot the exact explanatory factors of that result. Responses and comments with regards to the existing strengths and possible locus of improvements of UNODC research might be enlightening. A majority of comments translate participants’ appreciation of UNODC work, welcoming the wide scope of themes already studied by the Organization despite growing resource constraints and functional limitations in data collection processes. Among the advantages offered by UNODC research, the “methodological rigor”, the “quality” and “coverage” of provided information, and the “wide and easy access” to publications have been particularly underscored. However, a third of respondents also consider in their comments that “analytical approach” and “methodological standards” must be strengthened to ensure the Organization continue to fit for purpose in the future (figure 2). In that line, a few other comments put the emphasis on the need for UNODC to act more as a “pedagogue” on data collection techniques and methods, and to enhance technical support to the implementation of existing international, methodological standards.

Figure 2 – Responses to the question: “which of the following areas do you identify for improvement to ensure that UNODC research and analysis continue to be fit for purpose in the future?” (In percentage)



Most of participants providing a qualitative response to the question “Which would be the most important topics related to drugs and crime that should be analyzed by the UNODC research function and that are not yet covered?”, invited the Organization to **balance and continuously align their thematic choices with ongoing policy debates notably on drug-related issues**. UNODC is encouraged to expand the research scope to illicit drug consumption and demand, and underlined the importance of

working at translating the issues treated in the UNGASS Outcome Document into in-depth research themes. Specific questions have been identified to be further explored, in close consultation with Member States, under three main thematic areas:

- Illicit drug demand and consumption: interests include studies of poly-consumption, consumption and market behaviours (notably the role of juvenile delinquents in drug trade).
- Policy impact: proposed themes included studies on the effects of alternatives to prisons, and of the liberalization of policies regarding drug consumption.
- Illicit markets structure and evolution: interests include more research on the structural causes and consequences of drug and crime beyond its security dimensions (notably its possible links with sustainable development); the role of the Internet and international drug syndicates; the links between drug trafficking and terrorism; finally the proceeds of crime, money laundering and most effective countermeasures.

Products' accessibility and dissemination

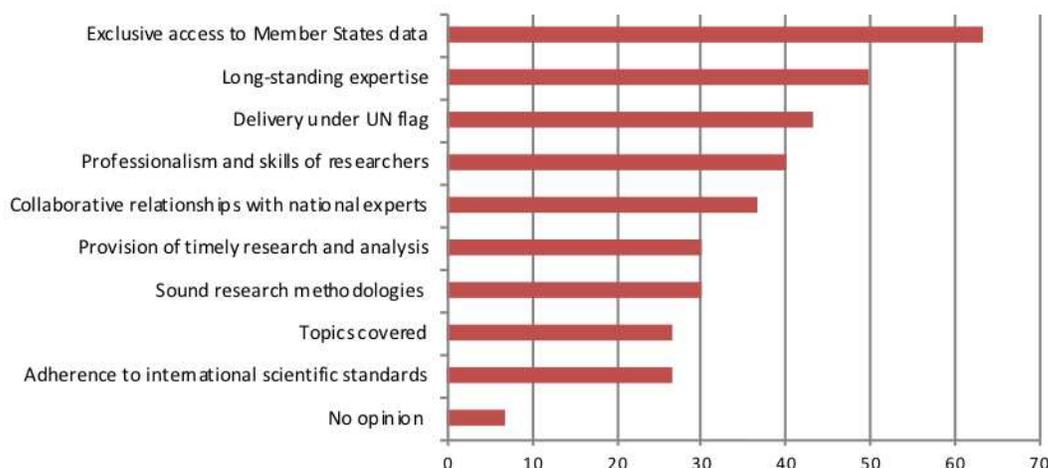
At least two thirds of respondents agree that the data and research findings are communicated in a timely manner, that products can be easily accessible, and are prepared in a clear, illustrative and user-friendly way. More particularly, survey participants are in a majority "mostly satisfied" with the UNODC online data portal proposing access to all UNODC statistics on drug indicators (use and health consequences, prices, and seizures) and crime (crime, homicide, victimization etc.).

Through the open-ended comments, **some respondents encouraged nevertheless the Organization to diversifying its communication channels (using partners' platforms for instance) and complement the online diffusion of its research products with special launch events and regional seminars to nourish further policy-makers' discussions** and through debates, to contribute to a better understanding of the reports contents. Others regret that products are often partially translated in each of the U.N. official languages, and that the online data portal can be complex to navigate at times.

UNODC research's added-value and dynamism

Survey participants consider UNODC as a leading center for research on drug and crime, which demonstrated its ability to undertake dynamic and innovative research. UNODC's exclusive access to Member States data and information, long-standing expertise, and U.N. authority were designated the main elements contributing to the Organization's added-value in comparison to other sources of knowledge on drugs and crime (other UN organizations, national statistics, academia etc.).

Figure 3 - Responses to "where do you think lies UNODC's added value in comparison to other sources of knowledge on drugs and crime (other UN organizations, national statistics, academia etc.)?" (In percentage)



Elaborating on the observable impact of the knowledge produced by UNODC, **participants welcome the Organization as “an effective partner” and its key role in both, “developing a solid evidence base” against which drug- and crime-related policies could be drawn, and in supporting stakeholders “to strengthen their data production capacity”**. Respondents highly valued the contributions of UNODC research “to ameliorate the understanding of the challenges related to drugs and crime”, to give account of current difficulties with regards to data generation and processing, as well as to inform the development of appropriate responses to address those different issues. In that regard, UNODC efforts to inform the global preparatory debates for the UNGASS 2016 on the world drug problem and to provide renewed understanding of the different dimensions of the world drug problem areas were particularly appreciated. The works on new psychoactive substances, on the impact of illicit drugs consumption on health and of illicit drug trafficking on socio-economic development were notably cited. Some respondents gave also concrete examples of how UNODC research products and data have been use as materials for judicial practitioners’ trainings notably in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. Participants also expressed appreciation of the technical services provided by UNODC to support “in a tailored manner” the amelioration of the quality of drug and crime statistics, as well as the methods preferred to conduct surveys. The introduction of new themes of survey (such as corruption, the quality of government services, victimization survey, etc.) was identified as particularly relevant to inform the development of law reforms or specific national plans.

Room for improvement

Over a half of respondents consider the UNODC to be “very much” (16) in a position to respond to new demands related to evolving international drug and crime related policy agendas; 40% have however a more cautious perspective (12 participants choose the ‘somewhat’ option). That result is to link with the comments provided to the various open-ended questions that gave the opportunity to respondents to offer insights on possible improvements. Three main terrains can be distinguished:

Strengthening capacity building activities targeted at improving data generation and collection processes - Several comments raised concerns over the accessibility, updatability and regularity of data constituting the evidence basis of UNODC analysis. They promoted the need of a better diffusion of

technical services and of closer collaboration with Member States agencies to improve data collection and respond to their specific research needs. The example of supporting the development of SDG indicators related to drugs and crime, and specific measures to achieve their full implementation by 2030 was mentioned. The importance of the Organization's efforts to develop and diffuse international methodological standards was also recalled.

Consolidating existing collaborative relationships with regional and national experts from data collection to knowledge generation - Although UNODC presents the advantages of producing global knowledge on drugs and crime issues, some respondents would welcome if UNODC productions could also reflect regional and/or field specificities, where significant for the theme treated. To fill this gap, it has been suggested to include more case studies in final products and global reports. It was also evoked to tie closer links with regional and national experts, including academia, regional research centers and practitioners with in-depth knowledge of the relevant fields (prosecutors were cited as an example), to enlarge the source base where appropriate, and include more qualitative information in order to have more in-depth analysis. Several participants recalled also the importance of official sources and of maintaining close collaboration and exchanges with national stakeholders.

Enhancing the policy impact of produced data and research – Respondents welcome UNODC's continued efforts to produce research up to date with the evolutions of the studied phenomenon, and in phase with contemporary policy debates. To support the Organization to that end, respondents encouraged to adapt the investigation methodologies and source base (working more with regional centers of research for example) to new trends and emerging issues in the drug and crime domains, in close consultation with national experts and other relevant stakeholders. Was also promoted the broadening the thematic focus of UNODC research in accordance to the needs and interests of Member States. Alternative to imprisonment, death penalty application, the financial aspects of drug trafficking, sustainable development, and information on drug treatment and consumption were listed as possible topics. To increase impact and enhance diffusion among decision-makers, it has been also argued that UNODC products would benefit from new formats and channels of communications: elaborating shorter and more graphic materials and/or using of other web platforms and types of media are proposed.

In their comments, most of respondents also **noted with concerns that it has become "obvious" that in order to respond at best to its prerogatives and future challenges, UNODC research scarce resources (human, financial and technical) highly constraint the Organization in its assigned missions.** Some participants asked for more transparency on that problematic issue, while others raised the need to attract more and new talents and expertise into the structure to ensure both continuity and adaptability of research.

Conclusive remarks

From these indicative results, it appears that UNODC research products and services continue to be fit for purpose as mandated as Members states and constitutes a global authority and source of knowledge

on drugs and crime. UNODC's exclusive access to Member States data and information constitute a clear comparative advantage in that sense. Now, to increase the Organization potentials of impact on drug and crime policy debates, and to guarantee produced data and analysis continue to be relevant for its audience and up-to-date with emerging studied trends, several terrains offer room for improvement.

First, on products use and relevance, efforts should be maintained in diversifying and simplifying products communication, , and broadening the scope and methods of investigation, notably on drug-related issues. These efforts are to be carried out in close consultation and dialogue with Member States as well as with the support of relevant regional stakeholders, and taking into serious consideration resource-related constrains. Second, diversifying the source base of UNODC research, (including regional and national experts) and consolidating technical assistance in terms of data collection methods and approach appear central for most of respondent in order to enrich UNODC productions and ensure consistency and reliability of collected data. Finally, the resource constraints are recognized to severely impacting on the Organization's missions and capacity.

Annex 5 - PRP quality assessment of selected research products

In the framework of the Peer Review of UNODC research function, the Panel has conducted a quality review of a sample of research reports, selected from products related to the period 2013-2016. The aim of this exercise consists in assessing the quality of the research outputs, i.e. their consistency, their robustness and their transparency – on the basis of international standards and methods. Such exercise implies to take into consideration the multi-dimensionality of the concept of quality, hence including an assessment of several domains such as quality of reporting, methodological rigour and shortfalls, and conceptual depth and bread. One of the assessment questions is how the reviewed product contributes to the knowledge needs in the fields of drugs and crime and to the priorities of its targeted audiences (MS, Governing Bodies, UN system etc.). Now, considering the timeframe allocated for the Peer Review, the diversity of research products and the parallel exercise of an in-depth cluster evaluation, the following approach has been chosen.

Proposed scope and framework of review

For comparability purpose, only reports and study-like type of products has been selected. The issues related to the processes of data collection and analysis production (such as reporting transparency, staff resources, quality management policies etc.) marked as pre-requisites of quality in most of international generic data quality assurance frameworks is dealt with throughout the report. In the same line, assessing data quality would require conducting another full assessment dedicated to statistics which could not be done in the timeframe of this Peer review. As stated in the TOR, the sample includes data related to SDG indicators, reports which have a high and low number of downloads ensuring with an adequate representation of national, regional and global products.

A common assessment template has been designed, using criteria that combine indicators of fully-fledge data quality assessment frameworks such as those used in the Data Quality Assurance Framework (DQAF), and evaluation questions guiding research papers peer review as conducted by academic international journal review committees. The template has been applied to each product. Considering the diversity and limited number of the products under review, it was found not to be relevant to apply a strict quantitative scoring system. It appeared that a qualitative assessment provided clearer elements on the strengths and weaknesses of selected publications, and a more useful basis for UNODC staff to engage improvement efforts.

A comment part provides explanatory details justifying the score and considers as well some most notable evolutions. In this perceptive, the scoring system is based on practices and is as follows: NA= Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not observed. Despite efforts from the Panel members and the consultant to guarantee the objectivity of this exercise, the findings can only be considered as indicative and engage only the opinions of the reviewers.

Product: World Drug report 2016

Criteria	Score
Purpose of the research	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The research question and scope are clearly stated and defined</i> ▪ <i>The triggers of the report are explained so the product addresses a research question or policy issue of interest to its targeted readership (national, international, policy-makers, academics etc.)</i> ▪ <i>The objectives of the research products are clear.</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p>
<p>Comments: The WDR 2016 demonstrates renewed commitment from the Organization to tie research to contemporary policy making debates and objectives and may mark a turning point in this line. Drawing on the key themes of the recent UNGASS, the 2016 edition of the report falls under the continuity of the international policy discussions on the world drug problem and builds bridges to the concomitant discussions on the SDG with a whole thematic chapter dedicated to drug problem and sustainable development interrelationship. It is presented as a direct response to support the commitments taken by Governments in the UNGASS outcome document and a contribution to the SDG discussions. It provides a more multifaceted picture than usual of the world drug problem, going beyond the traditional dichotomist approach of drug supply and demand trends. It examines to a great extent the realities of drug uses and its health consequences in different consumption environments including prisons, offers insight into the wide-ranging impact of drugs on people and societies, and provides a more nuanced picture of complex market trends, shedding light on pressing challenges and case studies such as new technologies and the policy changes impact notably those related to cannabis regulation. The report shows improved efforts in addressing issues of interest to its readership and international policy debate, in particular by adopting more systematically a human-right and gender-perspective of drug uses and trafficking involvement patterns. In line with previous editions, it continues to flag phenomena that will demand increased attention such as Darknet purchase practices, synthetic drugs and heroin markets, but also points out to possible global policy interrelationships drawing on the SDG agenda.</p>	
Transparency on the methodological approach	O
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Methods and approach are explained and accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience.</i> ▪ <i>The terms and conditions under which source data and statistics are collected, processed and disseminated are available to the public.</i> ▪ <i>Statement of the limitation of the methodology exists and possible impact is stated.</i> ▪ <i>Attempts are made to remedy limitations as stated.</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>O</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>O</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>O</i></p>
<p>Comments: A specific methodological note is available online in a separate document. Whereas the technicality of this piece may not be suitable to a general audience, it presents in details the preferred statistical approaches and challenges encountered in the data collection process. The report itself yet contains complete statements and explanatory paragraphs on methodological limitation, notably around the difficulty to provide global estimates deriving from often incomplete or absent data.</p>	
Evidence-base consistency	O
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The evidence-base underpinning findings, is constituted of primary sources.</i> ▪ <i>Source data are timely and routinely collected.</i> ▪ <i>Secondary sources used in the analysis are based on up to date references.</i> ▪ <i>Multiple lines of evidence are used and annotated as appropriate (statistics, literature review, survey, interviews, etc.).</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>O</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>PO</i></p>
<p>Comments: The report has the merits to put into perspective different indicators in a more systematic way than in its previous editions (seizure, production, cultivation, users mainly). Nevertheless, the indicator</p>	

framework remains unbalanced and mainly reflects a law enforcement perspective of drug realities. Future analysis could benefit from more diverse drug metrics that could take into consideration all the dimensions of the world drug problem as underlined at UNGASS and currently discussed at the UN Statistical Commission. With the view of providing source and data transparency, the report makes however clear mentions of some important caveats around measuring global illicit drug use trends. The minimum 2 year lapse of latest available data (here 2014) and the discrepancies between countries in their capacity to provide up to date information (only 20 countries) are pointed out as important shortfalls. Readers are invited to be cautious about these caveats in the interpretation of the information available in the Report. Available information relates mainly to the American and European continents, and therefore may prevent any full understanding of changes in global patterns and scales. The report is based on information provided by national sources through the ARQs in the period leading to the end 2015. UNODC provides the response rate for each of the questionnaire section and acknowledges that in some areas there is insufficient data to provide an accurate and comprehensive picture. In these cases, to remedy that limitation, other sources such as academic research or expert reports assorted with explanatory notes are used to supplement governmental information. Still, the analysis could benefit from a more diverse source base that would offer greater perspectives on drug-related realities and its existing measurement system.

Product relevance and serviceability

LO

- *The publication is delivered in a timely manner.* LO
- *Periodicity allows updated knowledge on studied phenomenon/ treated issue.* LO
- *The relevance and practical utility of the product in meeting users' needs are monitored.* O
- *The product contributes to generate, advance and diffuse knowledge in its domain.* LO

Comments: The WDR is annually released on the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (June 26) and launched through press release and global and national events. While the choice of this symbolic date contributes to keep awareness high on the issue and raise UNODC profile within the international community, it is quite isolated from key international policy meeting such as the CND meetings in March, and may reduce its impact. The publication periodicity, although demonstrating the dedication and rigor of UNODC experts, might be reconsidered considering i) global trends are difficult to appreciate from one year to another; ii) updated information are not always available and annual data collection can be challenging for most of participating countries; iii) the flagship report provide a global picture at the detriment of specific thematic or case studies that might be enlightening for future policy making. A 2-year publication assorted by shorter annual updates (as provided to Members of the CND every year) could be a good middle ground. Such change would free up more time for more specific national or thematic studies (ex: an emerging trend as identified in the global report) that could be more focused on policy and practical implications, and target specific knowledge needs. The recent online voluntary satisfactory survey that has been put in place could be q useful tool to identify these needs. One should nevertheless note that while this survey is a good step toward more regular monitoring of readership satisfaction, it presents limitations in terms of the representativeness and precision.

Product: International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (2015)

Criteria	Score
Purpose of the research	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The research question and scope are clearly stated and defined.</i> ▪ <i>The triggers of the report are explained so the product addresses a research question or policy issue of interest to its targeted readership (national, international, policy-makers, academics etc.).</i> ▪ <i>The objectives of the research products are clear.</i> 	<p>LO</p> <p>LO</p> <p>O</p>
<p>Comments: The ICCS is a unique statistical and methodological tool that responds to a long-overdue need to provide the international community with a comprehensive, standardized framework for producing statistics on crime and criminal justice, and improve research and analytical capabilities at both the national and international levels – an objective the international community first defined in the 1950s. Following a long consultative process presented in the first part of the tool, this publication sets up a clear multileveled classification system of crimes where criminal acts definitions are based on behaviors and not on legal provisions. This approach circumvents the latent legalistic obstacles and the challenges of harmonizing the apprehension of phenomena that are nationally defined and obey to specific legal provisions. The publication provides a detailed classification table that has been assorted by a series of tailored tools facilitating its use and implementation (roadmap, national workshops, training courses, note son specific offences such as gender-related ones). If the objectives of the instruments are clear and seem filled, it is too early in the implementing process to certify of the tool’s sustainability and impact.</p>	
Organization of the research product	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The structure allows clear distinction between evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations.</i> ▪ <i>The technical terminology does not act as a brake on the accessibility of the product and its main arguments by a non-specialized audience.</i> ▪ <i>The research product is user-friendly.</i> 	<p>n/a</p> <p>LO</p> <p>LO</p>
<p>Comments: The ICCS makes clear distinction between the process and criteria that have been necessary to the elaboration of an international classification of criminal offenses and the system of classification itself. Organized in two parts, the publication explains first the nature and purpose of such a tool, the principles guiding its elaboration (units, definitions, criteria used to build the classification, categorization system, special cases, etc.) as well as the conditions of its applicability to avoid any misuses or inadequate utilizations. The second part is dedicated to the classification table that is presented in a user-friendly and simplified way. Under 11 sections, the table proposes a common, methodological and definitional framework to improve crime statistical data quality and comparability. Offences are grouped under different levels and variables axed on a behavioral approach (perpetrator, victim, circumstances etc.) rather than a legal one, so statistics collected under that framework can be more easily used to inform research and tailor policies in the areas of crime prevention, rule of law and criminal justice reform. As simplified as it is, the publication is however dedicated to a technical audience of statisticians and/or national crime specialist to be implemented and used at national level as a model to structure and organize statistical data. Eventually, it provides criminal justice researchers and policy-makers comparable and précised data on criminal offenses.</p>	
Transparency on the methodological approach	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Methods and approach are explained and accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience.</i> ▪ <i>The terms and conditions under which source data and statistics are collected, processed and disseminated are available to the public.</i> ▪ <i>Statement of the limitation of the methodology exists and possible impact is stated.</i> ▪ <i>Attempts are made to remedy limitations as stated.</i> 	<p>LO</p> <p>n/a</p> <p>O</p> <p>LO</p>

Comments: To be able to develop a framework for the systematic production and comparison of statistical data across different criminal justice institutions and jurisdictions, researchers were fraught with challenges due to disparities in legal and/or analytical definitions, national legislations and reporting systems. As underlined in the first part of the tool, the vast disparity in approaches and sources used in the establishment of criminal laws by different countries makes it quasi impossible to create a consistent and comprehensive definition of crime, and even less likely to provide a standardized reporting system that could inform policy-making and future research. To overcome this challenge, a long consultative process has been undertaken out of which common denominators of what constitutes a “crime” have been defined. The tool proposes an innovating methodological approach that consists of axing the definition of crime on behavioral elements (perpetrator, nature of offense, means, intentionality, context etc. which are defined as criminal offences and are punishable as such by law) and adopting an event-based approach. Proposing precise descriptions of all criminal conducts that can occur around the globe, the ICCS elaborates a simplified and globally applicable classification that may allow greater comparability of data within and across countries. To further guarantee the sustainability and relevance of the ICCS tool, the UN-CTS - UNODC's primary instrument for collecting crime data, has been revised in 2017 to be fully consistent with the concepts, categories, and definitions of the ICCS and to respond to emerging data needs at national and international level, including data needs deriving from the SDGs.

Evidence-base consistency	N/A
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- *The evidence-base underpinning findings, is constituted of primary sources.*
- *Source data are timely and routinely collected.*
- *Secondary sources used in the analysis are based on up to date references.*
- *Multiple lines of evidence are used and annotated as appropriate (statistics, literature review, survey, interviews, etc.).*

Product relevance and serviceability	O
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| <i>The publication is delivered in a timely manner.</i> | <i>LO</i> |
| <i>Periodicity allows updated knowledge on studied phenomenon/ treated issue.</i> | <i>n/a</i> |
| <i>The relevance and practical utility of the product in meeting users’ needs are monitored.</i> | <i>LO</i> |
| <i>The product contributes to generate, advance and diffuse knowledge in its domain.</i> | <i>O</i> |

Comments: The ICCS has the potential to constitute a remarkable and unique tool to improve quality and comparability of data on crime and criminal justice at national and international level and to support national efforts to monitor SDG targets in the areas of public security and safety, trafficking, corruption, and access to justice. Now, the serviceability of that tool highly depends on its level of utilization and implementation. Monitoring its uses and the way the tool meets users’ needs is thus critical, but it remains unclear from the publication how this will be gauged. It is nevertheless encouraging to note that the tool has been developed assorted by a series of additional instruments to support countries in planning and ensuring the implementation of the ICCS in national statistics systems on crime and criminal justice. A "Roadmap for the Implementation of the ICCS in national contexts" lists the most important steps that countries need to consider for progressively applying the ICCS. In November 2016, a Virtual Platform has been set up to gather national focal points currently working on applying the ICCS in their respective countries (currently 77 members from 48 countries on five continents). A survey was also conducted on ICCS-TAG Virtual Platform to assess progress of ICCS implementation and national workshop and training courses are deployed as part of technical assistance program to countries to facilitate the dissemination of the ICCS and the commitment to full national implementation. In addition, ICCS is being used to guide the production of homicide data by national statistical systems.

Product: Colombia - Monitoreo de cultivos de coca 2014 (July 2015)

Criteria	Score
Purpose of the research	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The research question and scope are clearly stated and defined.</i> ▪ <i>The triggers of the report are explained so the product addresses a research question or policy issue of interest to its targeted readership (national, international, policy-makers, academics etc.).</i> ▪ <i>The objectives of the research products are clear.</i> 	<p>LO</p> <p>LO</p> <p>LO</p>
<p>Comments: This publication is delivered as part of the Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme under which the extension and evolution of illicit crops in designated countries including Colombia are monitored. As soon as the introduction, the objectives of this survey are clearly stated as well as the limits of the exercise. The report addresses the question of illicit crops cultivation situation and evolution providing a detailed picture of the coca cultivation zones and precursors routes in the country. It also provides specific analysis of public measures in place of alternative development, including pilot projects. The study of the root causes of illicit crop cultivation and the causal relationships between illicit cultivation and the broader socio-economic situation of the country are explicitly not addressed. The report adopts a trend analysis and illicit market study approach with the aim of providing a diverse audience of academic, policy-makers and civil society experts with statistical data and essential knowledge on the evolution of the coca cultivation situation in Colombia to inform policy-making and future research.</p>	
Organization of the research product	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The structure allows clear distinction between evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations.</i> ▪ <i>The technical terminology does not act as a brake on the accessibility of the product and its main arguments by a non-specialized audience.</i> ▪ <i>The research product is user-friendly.</i> 	<p>LO</p> <p>LO</p> <p>LO</p>
<p>Comments: The organization of the report is user-friendly, clear and comprehensive. A summary of results provide key figures and a comprehensive snapshot of the illicit coca cultivation in Colombia. Multiple maps, graphs, tables and satellites pictures illustrate the analysis in a relevant way helping the reader to visualize the reality of the phenomena and its associated challenges. One could nevertheless regret that the section dedicated to the current policy approach and measures implemented does not detail much on the policy implications and impact on the coca cultivation itself. On such a precise and localized object of study, such developments could better link knowledge production to policy debated and thinking, and thus more directly inform policy-making in that domain. The absence of an English translation is also to be noted.</p>	
Transparency on the methodological approach	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Methods and approach are explained and accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience.</i> ▪ <i>The terms and conditions under which source data and statistics are collected, processed and disseminated are available to the public.</i> ▪ <i>Statement of the limitation of the methodology exists and possible impact is stated.</i> ▪ <i>Attempts are made to remedy limitations as stated.</i> 	<p>LO</p> <p>LO</p> <p>LO</p> <p>O</p>
<p>Comments: As in most UNODC publications, a whole section is dedicated to a presentation and explanation of the methodological approach and limits, as well as of the technical means at disposal to conduct the survey. The survey of coca is built on satellites images and aerial recognitions. Since 2014, satellites can also identify illicit gold extraction areas. The methodological section explains the techniques at stakes as well as associated challenges (such as cloudy conditions affecting the images quality) and the methods used to interpret collected materials and data. The final picture edition techniques are also provided. Although this section is accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience, only</p>	

specialists could best apprehend the limits of the proposed methodology and the reliability of the data produced.

Evidence-base consistency **LO**

- *The evidence-base underpinning findings, is constituted of primary sources.* LO
- *Source data are timely and routinely collected.* LO
- *Secondary sources used in the analysis are based on up to date references.* LO
- *Multiple lines of evidence are used and annotated as appropriate (statistics, literature review, survey, interviews, etc.).* LO

Comments: The presentation and explanation of the data collection system and tools constitute a whole section of the report. In addition a new information system – SIMCi- also part of a national capacity-building initiative is exposed. The monitoring evident-base has been extending over the years, to include areas of fragile eco-system, national parks, indigenous lands and deforested lands.

Product relevance and serviceability **LO**

- *The publication is delivered in a timely manner.* LO
- *Periodicity allows updated knowledge on studied phenomenon/ treated issue.* LO
- *The relevance and practical utility of the product in meeting users’ needs are monitored.* O
- *The product contributes to generate, advance and diffuse knowledge in its domain.* LO

Comments: This publication is part of a unique annual series of illicit crop satellite-based survey in place since 1999. The survey responds to an explicit request of the Government of Colombia to support the development of a national tool on the issue that could serve to policy-making, policy evaluation and research on illicit crop cultivation. UNODC and the Government of Colombia have signed a MOU to guarantee the sustainability and the relevance of the exercise to different targeted stakeholders needs. In this framework, UNODC is also supporting the development of an integral information system –SIMCI – covering the entire territory of Colombia through the creation of a vast GPS network. UNODC remains the only institution in the region to produce such knowledge. One could however regret that the survey is limited to the territorial aspects of illicit crop cultivation and do not address other dimensions such as affected population socio-economic conditions of cultivation, past policy effects, etc – dimensions that have been recognized as essential at the UNGASS to advance a better understanding of the drug problem and increase policy efficiency.

Product: The Global Study on Homicide (2013)

Criteria	Score
Purpose of the research	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The research question and scope are clearly stated and defined</i> ▪ <i>The triggers of the report are explained so the product addresses a research question or policy issue of interest to its targeted readership (national, international, policy-makers, academics etc.)</i> ▪ <i>The objectives of the research products are clear.</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p>
<p><i>Comments:</i> Unique global reference of international homicide, this study succeeds in mapping out lethal violence trends since 1955 to 2012 and the realities of a sensitive topic at the crossroad of diverse criminal but also social dynamics, factors and consequences, from the global to the sub-national level, as well as from the perspective of age and sex. Beyond this statistical approach, the study proposes also a better understanding of the modalities and contexts of homicides: homicide mechanisms and enablers are analyzed, while a typology of the different forms of lethal crime is developed. One could regret the absence of further developments of the different effects of such violent crime (family, social environment, public safety etc.) exposed could further inform public policy debates in this domain.</p>	
Organization of the research product	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The structure allows clear distinction between evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations.</i> ▪ <i>The technical terminology does not act as a brake on the accessibility of the product and its main arguments by a non-specialized audience.</i> ▪ <i>The research product is user-friendly.</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p>
<p><i>Comments:</i> Thematically organized into six chapters and two methodological annexes, the study depicts in a comprehensive and accessible way international homicide. The proposed classification of homicide as well as the analysis of homicide mechanisms (by looking at various weapons and the role of other violence dynamics including conflict, illicit trade etc.) enables the reader to apprehend the various aspects of the complex realities of lethal violence. The multiple maps, graphs and simplified schemes participate to a quick and clear understanding. The online translation of the study into an entirely dedicated website linked to relevant online datasets and data profiles also provides fast access to different thematic categories of information and report chapters. The study structural, editorial and diffusion choices thus make available to a diverse and global readership a very useful and user-friendly instrument.</p>	
Transparency on the methodological approach	LO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Methods and approach are explained and accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience.</i> ▪ <i>The terms and conditions under which source data and statistics are collected, processed and disseminated are available to the public.</i> ▪ <i>Statement of the limitation of the methodology exists and possible impact is stated.</i> ▪ <i>Attempts are made to remedy limitations as stated.</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p>
<p><i>Comments:</i> One chapter and two annexes (statistical and methodological), assorted by a list of references expose the study data collection strategy, results and challenges. In particular, difficulties related to the availability, quality and comparability of homicide data are detailed. A comprehensive table of homicide data produced by national registration systems since 2005, as available to UNODC is also translated in a transparent manner. To overcome exposed challenges, several sections throughout the study reflect on how to improve homicide data and provide arguments and examples for future academic and/or public policy debates. A roadmap to improve crime statistics at national levels is presented as well as references to other UNODC tools such as the ICCS contributing to data collection systems harmonization. Case studies of successful improvement of national statistical capacity and innovations at regional levels such as the creation of a Center of Excellence in Mexico in partnership with INEGI to support country in improving their</p>	

statistical system further nourish readers' reflection of good practices and possible way forward.	
Evidence-base consistency	O
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The evidence-base underpinning findings, is constituted of primary sources.</i> ▪ <i>Source data are timely and routinely collected.</i> ▪ <i>Secondary sources used in the analysis are based on up to date references.</i> ▪ <i>Multiple lines of evidence are used and annotated as appropriate (statistics, literature review, survey, interviews, etc.).</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>PO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>O</i></p>
<p><i>Comments:</i> All data sources are referenced and the data collection process explained. The study is based on the UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013) for 219 countries and territories. In most cases, collected data are derived the UNODC annual collection of crime data (the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, UN-CTS) and from national data repositories generated by either the criminal justice or the public health system (for countries for which UN-CTS data were not available - the percentage of countries reporting data in 2012 was 50 per cent - and for those variables not included in the UN-CTS). The study's data sources also include UNODC field offices figures, publicly accessible national studies, estimates produced by the World Health Organization (WHO) and academic surveys. In addition to important differences in data availability across regions, homicide data consistency and quality depends very much on national data accuracy and comparability notably due to the difference in definitions used to record intentional homicide offences. To overcome those challenges, the authors defend their choice to use standardized models such as estimates from WHO to ensure a minimum of consistency when multiple lines of evidence can be found. The typology of data used to calculated various information provided in the report, the data validation processes and the reference data choices are also clearly stated. On the publication regularity, one can only deplore that this study is the last one of a well received series started in 2011. Updated data would provide a more accurate picture of current global homicide situation.</p>	
Product relevance and serviceability	O
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The publication is delivered in a timely manner.</i> ▪ <i>Periodicity allows updated knowledge on studied phenomenon/ treated issue.</i> ▪ <i>The relevance and practical utility of the product in meeting users' needs are monitored.</i> ▪ <i>The product contributes to generate, advance and diffuse knowledge in its domain.</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>PO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>PO</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>O</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>LO</i></p>
<p><i>Comments:</i> This study – second and last of a two-publication series started in 2011 – has become an indispensable knowledge instrument to apprehend global lethal violence and its most recent trends, modalities and developments. In addition to information collected through the online voluntary satisfaction survey, the relevance and utility of this product has been monitored through this peer review. It has been observed that the study remains a reference for policy-makers and researchers on global lethal violence, and has not found so far any credible competitor. Reviewers and interviewees find it quite damageable for this field to leave such efforts unfulfilled and not renewed. Renewing such study would allow the production of a more accurate and timely picture of global homicide based on updated data, and encourage further national homicide data collection efforts.</p>	

Annex 6 – UNODC contributions to SDGs indicators

UNODC statistics are proved to be highly relevant to monitor global trends related to SDG 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14-15, and 16, and has been identified as the lead or partner agency for compiling 17 statistical SDG indicators. The table below lists the different indicators to which UNODC contributes.

Target	Indicator	Role	Tier class. ³²
Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages 16			
33.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol	3.5.1 Coverage of treatment interventions (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance use disorders	Custodian with WHO	III
Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls			
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age	Custodian with WHO, UNWOMEN, UNICEF, UNFPA	II
	5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence	Custodian with WHO, UNWOMEN, UNICEF, UNFPA	II
Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries			
10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies	10.7.2 Number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies	Partner (custodians: DESA Population Division, IOM)	III
Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable			
11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities	11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months	Custodian	III

³² To facilitate the implementation of the global indicator framework, all indicators are classified by the IAEG-SDGs into three tiers on the basis of their level of methodological development and the availability of data at the global level, as follows:

Tier 1: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.

Tier 2: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries.

Tier 3: No internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss				
15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products	15.7.1 / 15.c. 1. Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked	Custodian with CITES		II
15.c Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities				
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels				
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age	Custodian with WHO		I II II
	16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months	Custodian		
	16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live	Custodian		
16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation	Custodian		II
	16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18	Partner (custodian: UNICEF)		II
16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	16.3.1 Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms	Custodian		II
	16.3.2 Unsensitized detainees as a proportion of overall prison population	Custodian		I
16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime	16.4.1 Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars)	Custodian with UNCTAD		III
	16.4.2 Proportion of seized, found or	Custodian with		III

	surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments	UNODA	
16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	16.5.1 Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months	Custodian	II
	16.5.2 Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months	Custodian with the World Bank	II

Sources : This table compiles information as of December 2017 from UN-DESA documents Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators, Work Plans for Tier III Indicators (March 2017), sets of metadata for indicators (as of February 2018) and online database of indicators focal points, available on SDG indicators websites: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>