Distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues, and honored guests,

I am honored to address this 15th session of the United Nations Conference, dedicated to the "Joint Constructive Dialogue on the Review Process." My name is Dr. Fawzi Banao, and I serve as the coordinator of the Think Tank of Sahel. In my role, I focus on critical issues impacting the Sahel region, including defense economics and the intricate challenges posed by terrorism activities and organized fraud.

**The Nature and Impact of Organized Fraud**

Organized fraud represents a significant and growing threat to both national and global security. It encompasses a range of illicit activities, from financial scams and identity theft to sophisticated corporate fraud and cybercrime. These activities are often orchestrated by transnational criminal organizations that exploit the vulnerabilities of our interconnected economies and digital infrastructures.

In the Sahel region, the impact of organized fraud is particularly severe. The fragility of local economies, coupled with the presence of ongoing conflicts, creates an environment where fraudulent activities can thrive. This not only undermines economic development but also erodes public trust in institutions and exacerbates social instability.

Furthermore, natural resources such as gold are highly sought after by armed terrorist groups. States affected by terrorism must urgently implement mirror analysis of goods in customs administration to track fraud and prevent these resources from funding illegal activities.

**The Importance of International Cooperation**

Addressing the challenge of organized fraud requires a concerted international effort. No single country can tackle this issue alone, given the transnational nature of the threat. Effective international cooperation must encompass several key areas:

- Information Sharing: Timely and accurate information sharing among countries is crucial for identifying and disrupting fraudulent networks. This includes sharing intelligence on emerging fraud schemes, known perpetrators, and suspicious financial transactions. States affected by terrorism must urgently implement mirror data analysis of goods in customs administration to track fraud. This database generated from mirror analysis of each product will enhance both the detection and surveillance of goods.
Harmonization of Legal Frameworks: Differences in legal systems and regulatory frameworks can hinder the fight against organized fraud. Harmonizing laws and regulations, particularly concerning the prosecution of fraud and the seizure of illicit assets, can enhance the effectiveness of international efforts.

Capacity Building: Developing the capacity of national authorities such as customs fraud to detect, investigate, and prosecute fraud is essential. This includes providing technical assistance, training, and resources to law enforcement agencies, financial regulators, and judicial bodies.

The Role of Spatial Econometrics and Security Cooperation

Our study, utilizing spatial econometrics tools, has demonstrated the existence of spatial contagion of terrorism. This finding underscores that national security measures alone cannot effectively combat customs fraud and smuggling. Therefore, cooperation between customs administrations, ministries of defense, and neighboring countries represents a crucial challenge to efficiently combat the financing of terrorist groups.

It is imperative to encourage and support joint customs surveillance initiatives, enabling cooperation between neighboring states and expanding the scope of collaboration to non-military administrations, such as tax and customs administrations. This holistic approach will contribute to dismantling organized fraud networks and the alliance between smugglers and terrorist groups across borders.

The Role of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) provides a valuable framework for international cooperation in combating organized fraud. Article 32 of the Convention, which focuses on technical assistance, is particularly relevant. By promoting the implementation of Article 32, we can enhance the capacity of states to address organized fraud through coordinated efforts, technical support, and mutual assistance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, organized fraud is a pervasive and evolving threat that demands a unified global response. By strengthening international cooperation, harmonizing legal frameworks, building national capacities, fostering public-private partnerships, and supporting victims, we can make significant strides in combating this form of crime. Let us seize this opportunity to reinforce our commitment to collective action and to building a safer and more secure world for all.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to our continued dialogue and collaboration in addressing this critical issue.

Dr. FAWZI BANAO
Chief of Think Tank of Sahel

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