



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**Responding to the human security threat
from Transnational Organized Crime in
East Asia and the Pacific**

**Address to the
4th Asian Criminological Society Conference
by
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for East Asia and the Pacific**

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Excellencies, Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ahn nyung ha seyo – and good morning.

My purpose today is to share with you some thoughts on the growth of transnational organized crime in East Asia and the Pacific and what we can do to fight back.

Essentially what I wish to speak with you about is the threat to the rule of law.

Why is this a problem? Because without the rule of law there can be no sustainable development – no human security – no justice – and no human rights.

The number of human beings living together on the planet grows dramatically every year. And so does the number – and the volume – of exchanges among them. The vast majority of these exchanges are legitimate and beneficial. But a significant share is not.

The markets for such illicit flows criss-cross the globe. They spawn and fuel – and are themselves fuelled by – transnational organized crime (TOC). They convey drugs, arms, trafficked women, illegally-logged timber, smuggled migrants, electronic waste, stolen natural resources and protected-animals' parts. And my list is not exhaustive.

The result is that hundreds of billions of dollars of dirty money flows through the world every year. UNODC's best estimate puts this amount at \$870 billion.

This money distorts local economies. It corrupts institutions. It fuels conflict. And it makes some criminals obscenely wealthy.

The sorts of things which most citizens of the planet wish for – those things which “*We the Peoples of the United Nations*” celebrate in the Preamble to our UN Charter – justice, security, development, human rights – these goals are all under threat from organized crime and transnational organized crime (which I shall call “TOC” for the rest of this address).

TOC therefore needs to be placed where it belongs – right at the center of our understanding of the security challenges faced by our globalizing world.

I am pleased to tell you that – from my vantage point as a UN officer working in the field for many years – the governments of the world have realized the danger of TOC and they are fighting back.

If I compare where we are now with where we were two decades ago, we can see the difference. Stopping the operations of TOC has become a matter of international priority. Here are some examples:

- I started out with UNODC 20 years ago as a humble drug control officer. At that time, my only job was to focus on drug production, trafficking and demand.

- Now UNODC covers all crime types and is mandated to support its member states to tackle crime, drugs, corruption and terrorism – in all their manifestations.
- That is at ground level.
- At the higher level, other changes have occurred which reflect how much has happened to transform the landscape of response.

- In 2003, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime entered into force.
- The following year, the United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, identified **transnational organized crime** as one of “six clusters of threats with which the world must be concerned now and in the decades ahead”.
- In February 2010, the UN Security Council warned of “the serious threat posed [...] by drug trafficking and transnational organized crime to international security in different regions of the world.”
- In March 2011, the UN Secretary-General established a UN System Task Force ("Task Force") to combat the threats to security and stability presented by transnational organized crime and drug trafficking.
- In January of this year, our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, outlined his 5-Year Action Agenda. One of his 5 pillars is to help make the world safer and more secure. Under this pillar he urges us to counter terrorism, TOC, piracy and drug trafficking.

However, we need to translate all this political will into concrete results. To do this, I believe we need to cover four areas. So, for the remainder of this address, I will share with you my thoughts on all four. But today I will concentrate especially on the first and the last.

1. **Know the problem**
2. **Establish the normative framework**
3. **Build our technical capacity**
4. **Expand regional partnerships**

1. KNOW THE PROBLEM

Making progress against TOC requires policymakers to have a broader understanding of the extent, and nature and dynamics of the threat.

The task of mounting a response is daunting because information on organized crime is often limited to anecdotes and case studies. There are very few global data sets on organized crime topics. None are comprehensive. The topic is sensitive. In addition, international data-sharing has been slow to develop – particularly when it comes to estimating the size of the problem among markets which are extremely dynamic. Any assessment is likely to be controversial.

So – part of my reason for being here today is to inform you that UNODC will shortly release a **Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment** (or TOCTA) for East Asia and the Pacific. The TOCTA will be launched a few weeks from now in

Bangkok. We will do our best to bring its findings to as many policymakers as possible in the region.

The background is this. For the past 18 months, a team of dedicated professionals across the region whom I have been privileged to lead from our Bangkok Office has undertaken an unprecedented effort to analyze and describe the nature and scale of transnational organized crime in our diverse region – East Asia and the Pacific – covering 34 countries and territories – a vast region which accounts for 30 per cent of the world's population.

The report is divided into 4 main sections, namely

- People,
- Drugs,
- Environment and
- Goods.

Within each chapter, different forms of TOC are profiled, including

- the nature of the market,
- how the trafficking is conducted,
- who is involved, and
- the estimated revenue value of the flows.

I am now putting on screen the list of flows we will examine. The **12 TOC flows** which you see are served by both loose networks and durable, large-scale criminal enterprises.

[LIST GOES ON SCREEN – BUT IS NOT READ]

1. Migrant smuggling in SE Asia
2. Trafficking women from SE Asia to Thailand
3. Migrant Smuggling from East / SE Asia to US and EU
4. Migrant Smuggling through region to Australia and Canada
5. Heroin trafficking
6. Methamphetamine trafficking
7. Illegal Wildlife trade
8. Illegal Timber trade
9. Illegal trade in electronic waste
10. Ozone-Depleting Substances (ODS)
11. Counterfeit consumer goods
12. Fraudulent essential medicines

Unfortunately, our findings indicate that TOC is, in many respects, still thriving. I cannot provide you – in advance of the launch – with the specific contents of the report – or the numbers. But I can hint at some of its findings.

- Would you be surprised to learn that the largest illicit crime flow in our region is **not** related to the trafficking of either heroin – or methamphetamines?
- What should our response be if we learn that the profits generated by human trafficking are – when compared with other flows – actually quite small?

- And how should we react to this knowledge when we consider the evil of the trafficking process and the destruction it brings to so many people's lives?
- What does it mean when we call for a “*Drug Free ASEAN by the year 2015*” if the evidence is mounting that opium production in SE Asia is growing and that methamphetamine seizures in the Greater Mekong have increased by a factor of four between 2008 and 2010?
- Should we be concerned that between one-third and one-half of the heroin consumed in our region comes from Afghanistan? If we do not achieve success in reducing this production, what will it mean to significantly reduce opium production in Myanmar – as I believe we can – within the next 5 years?
- How many of us know that in East and Southeast Asia, the crime of trafficking electronic waste products – so-called e-waste – actually funds TOC to the tune of billions of dollars?
- Would you be surprised to learn that the majority of the illegal trade in timber is embedded within the region's legal trade? And – more than this – that our region accounts for around 70 per cent of the entire global illegal trade in illegal timber.
- You may know that around two-thirds of the world's counterfeit products originate from our region. But do you know that – according to our research – between one-third and two-thirds of essential medicines tested in parts of our region are bogus? And that fraudulent medicines are most prevalent where there is the lowest risk of detection – not necessarily the highest rate of return?

These are some of the new trends which our report will highlight.

The report will conclude with a series of practical recommendations – implications for our response.

Our primary focus will be on the implications for the criminal justice system. But we hope that our recommendations, combined with enlightened economic and social policies, can help the region better address the significant illicit markets and the resulting TOC threats that we currently face.

2. ESTABLISH THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

The second of four imperatives is the need to establish international norms and conventions. These are what set the stage for our individual and collective response.

During the past decade the framework established by the TOC Convention and the UN Convention Against Corruption have delivered this framework. Both norms are increasingly being used to set out the legislative and regulatory framework for countering TOC at the national level. There is yet more work which must be done at a regional level to implement these conventions. And it is for this purpose that the

organization I represent – the United Nations – is strategically designated to provide technical assistance.

3. BUILD TECHNICAL CAPACITY

I move on to our third imperative. Technical capacity. Countries must be equipped to respond. This means possessing the national technical means to counteract TOC – not just through laws. But at the sharp end. Examples include ensuring that law enforcement, prosecutors and the judicial establishment are trained and equipped to meet the challenge. This is an area where many of us sitting in this room are already fully engaged.

4. EXPAND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

So much for knowledge – norms – and technical capacity. But what about the fourth imperative? The response beyond borders?

In our fluid globalizing world, none of the former three will succeed if we do not have the fourth.

One of the key problems in the response to TOC is that law enforcement is inherently national in character. Officials tend to see themselves as limited to action within their national jurisdiction.

We must therefore integrate national responses into international strategies. We must do this by promoting partnerships across borders and international networks which champion **“transnational organized justice”**. This includes promoting regional collaborative efforts on border control. This includes mutual legal assistance (including efforts like the joint collaborative exercise between the Korean Institute of Criminology, the Republic of Korea’s Supreme Prosecutor’s Office and UNODC in the form of Towards AsiaJust). This includes cooperation on extradition and other similar efforts which require a mindset and a vision that transcends national boundaries.

“It takes a network to defeat a network.”

Conclusion

As I move to conclude, I would like to do two things. First to thank the KIC – as co-host of this event – for inviting the United Nations. We cooperate closely with both the KIC and the Supreme Prosecutors Office in Southeast Asia to promote transnational organized justice.

The second is to share a personal thought with you.

I believe that it is possible to claim that at this stage in our history, globalization has progressed much faster than our collective ability to regulate it. If this is the case, then, it will be in the unregulated grey markets that organized crime will continue to grow. So we must continue the fight this growth of illicit markets. Demand exists for drugs, prostitution, cheap labour, timber, wild-animal parts and counterfeit goods.

Most of these crimes are **high-profit and low-risk**. But because these crime flows damage lives and erode social fabric, the time has come to reverse this balance. We must fight the demand by changing our consumption patterns. And we must make these illicit flows high-risk to the criminals.

International cooperative action **is** developing. I can see this for myself. But it is not happening fast enough. The United Nations will – in the coming months – be issuing a call to action, driven by what the TOCTA tells us.

For – and again this is my personal opinion – I firmly believe that societies based on the rule of law will win through in the end. In the final analysis, this is how we can best achieve – and preserve – the goals of the UN Charter: justice, security, development and human rights.

I end by sharing the view that, in recent world history, there are perhaps few better examples of how this can be made to work – over a short period of time – than the country on whose soil I am privileged to make these remarks today – the Republic of Korea.

Kam sa hap nida – and thank you.