



Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

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Technical assistance

Provision of technical assistance to States in the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto

Report of the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 8/4, entitled “Implementation of the provisions on technical assistance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime”, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime noted that technical assistance was a fundamental part of the work carried out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to assist Member States in the effective implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto and welcomed the work of the Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance.

2. The UNODC global, regional and country programmes provide technical assistance to Member States across a wide spectrum of organized crime and within the broader framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNODC Strategy for 2021–2025 provides a clear direction for UNODC engagement, recognizing the multidimensional nature of the Office’s work, which links the peace and security, development and human rights pillars of the United Nations. The Strategy contains five thematic areas, within which priority commitments are identified. Preventing and countering transnational organized crime is one of these five thematic areas and facilitating the transfer of expertise in implementing the mandates of the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention is one of the main commitments of this thematic area. UNODC is committed to supporting Member States to build solid legal frameworks against transnational organized crime, facilitating the transfer of expertise and best practices and building the capacity of law enforcement and justice officials to better investigate and prosecute such crimes, including through enhanced cross-border cooperation. These commitments are in line with the 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 16, on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. The work of UNODC related to the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto is directly linked to various targets of Goal 16, in particular those related to trafficking in persons (16.2), reducing

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illicit financial and arms flows (16.4) and strengthening institutions through international cooperation to prevent violence and combat crime (16.a).

3. In the present report, UNODC provides Member States with an overview of technical assistance activities that it has implemented through its global programmes in relation to the implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto between July 2020 and June 2022. The technical assistance activities covered in the report are divided into activities implementing the Convention, activities implementing the Protocols thereto and activities concerning serious crime.

II. Technical assistance in the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

A. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

4. After 10 years of unremitting efforts, the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention established, in its resolution 9/1, the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, which is funded through a mixture of existing resources and voluntary contributions. In its resolution 10/1, the Conference decided to launch the first review phase of the Mechanism. The Global Programme to Support the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, launched in February 2019 and currently designed to run until the end of 2030, is enabling the smooth operation of the Mechanism by supporting the involvement of parties and other stakeholders therein. The Global Programme is also responsible for the development and maintenance of the main tools to be used during the review process, in particular “RevMod”, the secure online module that serves as the main communication and information management tool for the Mechanism, hosting all stages of country reviews. Furthermore, the Global Programme has been assisting focal points and governmental experts in their engagement in the review process, including through the development of targeted guidance materials, such as dedicated manuals and an e-learning module, and delivering over 60 training sessions on the Mechanism and the use of “RevMod”, reaching over 1,500 practitioners from more than 100 countries. The Global Programme will also support national experts in the preparation of the list of observations during the country reviews and facilitate the exchange of good practices, challenges and solutions. Furthermore, it will support the identification of technical assistance needs, enabling relevant UNODC programmes to respond through tailor-made technical assistance and capacity-building activities. The operation of the Mechanism will substantively promote the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto and contribute to preventing and combating organized crime effectively.

5. The Global Programme on Implementing the Organized Crime Convention: from Theory to Practice, the second phase of which was launched in 2021, has continued its work in supporting States to strengthen normative responses to transnational organized crime, including through developing robust legislative and strategic frameworks. In 2021 alone, the Global Programme supported 2,908 stakeholders (47 per cent of whom were women), including legislators, policymakers, criminal justice practitioners and representatives of civil society, academia and the private sector, in strengthening normative frameworks against transnational organized crime and enhancing the implementation of the Convention. The main workstreams of the Global Programme are: (a) building the capacities of national authorities and other stakeholders to implement the Convention through legislation and strategies; (b) developing tools to support policymakers, legislators and practitioners in preventing and countering transnational organized crime; (c) disseminating knowledge through the knowledge management portal known as

Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC); and (d) strengthening advocacy and enhancing education on the Convention.

6. In order to support the development of legislation and strategies against organized crime in all its forms and manifestations, the Global Programme on Implementing the Organized Crime Convention: from Theory to Practice has produced a number of tools. Among these are guides on drafting legislation, including in the framework of implementation of the Convention, such as the second edition of the *Model Legislative Provisions against Organized Crime*, and on specific criminal activities, such as *Combating Waste Trafficking: A Guide to Good Legislative Practices*, the *Guide on Drafting Legislation to Combat Wildlife Crime*, and *Combating Falsified Medical Product-Related Crime: A Guide to Good Legislative Practices*. Further tools include the *Digest of Cyber Organized Crime* and the *Digest of Cases of International Cooperation in Criminal Matters Involving the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as a Legal Basis*, and the issue papers *Organized Crime and Gender: Issues Relating to the United Nations Transnational Organized Crime Convention*, *The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and International Human Rights Law and Policymaking and the Role of Online Intermediaries in Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking*. These guides are used to support technical assistance activities on the implementation of the Convention, including the work on the implementation of the observations emanating from the Implementation Review Mechanism that is expected to commence after the conclusion of the first review cluster. The technical assistance will also be delivered through the network of regional hubs on the implementation of the Convention, the first one of which, covering West and Central Africa, was inaugurated in Côte d'Ivoire in 2021.

7. To support the development of comprehensive strategies to prevent and counter organized crime, pursuant to Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention resolution 10/4, the Global Programme on Implementing the Organized Crime Convention: from Theory to Practice has developed the “Organized crime strategy toolkit for developing high-impact strategies”, which is currently available in 10 languages. Using the toolkit as a basis, regional multi-stakeholder meetings were organized, gathering over 300 stakeholders from 54 jurisdictions across Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and South-East Europe, as well as from regional and international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. In addition to regional dissemination of the toolkit, UNODC provided direct support in the development of national strategies against organized crime in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Jamaica, Montenegro and Mozambique. It also supported the Economic Community of West African States in the development of a comprehensive legal framework against transnational organized crime.

8. Through the Global Programme on Implementing the Organized Crime Convention: from Theory to Practice, UNODC will continue to promote and support the development of evidence-based responses to organized crime by maintaining the SHERLOC knowledge management portal, which is freely accessible to the public (<https://sherloc.unodc.org>). Serving as a one-stop shop on legislation, case law, national and regional strategies, treaties and bibliographical data on organized crime and terrorism, SHERLOC covers 15 types of criminal activities, namely, participation in an organized criminal group, corruption, counterfeiting, drug trafficking, money-laundering, obstruction of justice, cybercrime, piracy and maritime crimes, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons, trafficking in cultural property, crimes affecting the environment, falsified medical products, trafficking in firearms and terrorism. The portal is available in all six official languages of the United Nations, as well as in further languages through the integrated automatic translation tool. SHERLOC also hosts the restricted-access directory of competent national authorities and the *Legislative Guide for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. In 2021, the portal saw an increase in the number of users, with over 316,000 stakeholders visiting it, including 39,800 in May 2021, which was an all-time monthly record. SHERLOC is currently being updated to

include teaching tools on organized crime and terrorism initially developed under the Education for Justice initiative. These tools include a series of university modules supporting tertiary-level education.

9. The aim of the Global Programme for Strengthening Capacities of Member States to Prevent and Combat Transnational Organized and Serious Crime is to act as a global facilitator for central authorities dealing with international cooperation in criminal matters. In this regard, it provides secretariat support to three judicial cooperation networks: (a) the Network of West African Central Authorities and Prosecutors against Organized Crime; (b) the Network of Prosecutors and Central Authorities from Source, Transit and Destination Countries in response to Transnational Organized Crime in Central Asia and Southern Caucasus; and (c) the South-East Asia Justice Network. In 2021, the Global Programme facilitated 76 cases of judicial cooperation through the three networks. The Global Programme also coordinates with judicial cooperation networks supported by other organizations and with central authorities not members of any network and facilitated 43 cases of judicial cooperation in 2021 and 23 as of 15 May 2022. The aim of the networks is to promote the expeditious execution of mutual legal assistance requests for all forms of serious and organized crime through formally appointed contact points authorized to serve as “active intermediaries” to facilitate judicial cooperation in criminal matters. In addition to the case work performed by the contact points, the networks may convene or establish working groups on specific thematic issues and may facilitate training and the development or dissemination of practical tools and guides through regional meetings and capacity-building activities. They also hold yearly plenary meetings to allow for direct communication between the contact points and they facilitate the organization of bilateral meetings at the request of members for speeding up and/or resolving mutual legal assistance matters. The Global Programme also supports the Criminal Justice Forum for Asia and the Pacific, which is co-organized by the Ministry of Justice of Japan and UNODC and was an outcome of the Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The objective of the Forum is to strengthen regional cohesion and commitment for international cooperation by bringing together, on an annual basis, criminal justice practitioners and exchanging information and practical knowledge on mutual legal assistance and other criminal justice matters.

10. In addition, the Global Programme for Strengthening Capacities of Member States to Prevent and Combat Transnational Organized and Serious Crime coordinates UNODC technical assistance on combating trafficking in falsified medical products and leads an informal task force, together with representatives from the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Police Criminal Organization (INTERPOL), the World Health Organization and the UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme. A train-the-trainer guide for law enforcement officials on investigating trafficking in falsified medical products is being finalized and, in coordination with the UNODC Regional Office for Central and West Africa, awareness-raising and support is being provided through a working group on falsified medical products created within the Network of West African Central Authorities and Prosecutors against Organized Crime.

B. Laundering of proceeds of crime

11. The Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism continues to provide technical assistance and training to Member States, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [76/187](#), [75/196](#) and [74/177](#). In its resolutions, the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention has underlined the need to address the laundering of proceeds of crime and conducting parallel financial investigations as a core theme in relation to all forms of organized crime. The Global Programme helps Member States to strengthen existing systems to counter money-laundering and the financing of terrorism and assists them in

detecting, seizing and confiscating illicit proceeds, as required under United Nations and other international standards, in particular the Organized Crime Convention. This is achieved through the development of policies and the provision of in-depth training to national administrations and private sector actors dealing with issues related to countering money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. The target beneficiaries of the Global Programme includes legislative drafters, parliamentarians, financial intelligence unit staff, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, magistrates, judges, customs and immigration officers, asset forfeiture unit personnel and relevant private sector actors.

12. The Organized Crime Convention recognizes that asset forfeiture and confiscation are important elements of crime prevention and criminal justice. Building on that recognition, the Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism continues to support the inter-agency networks for asset recovery of Southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific, West Africa and West and Central Asia. These informal networks of law enforcement and judicial practitioners support the complete asset recovery process, from the starting point of the investigation involving the tracing of assets, to freezing and seizure, management and, finally, forfeiture or confiscation, including any necessary asset-sharing between jurisdictions. The various networks are in different stages of development, with the Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network for Southern Africa being the most advanced.

13. In the past two years, the Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism has extended its scope and geographical presence. In addition to a small core staff at UNODC headquarters in Vienna, the Global Programme currently has 13 advisers on countering money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. The advisers cover Angola, Ecuador, Indonesia, Mozambique, Peru, East and Southern Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, South-East Asia, Central Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, and the Mekong subregion.

C. Law enforcement

14. The global programme on strengthening criminal justice cooperation along trafficking routes (CRIMJUST) directly supports the implementation of the Organized Crime Convention, with particular focus on articles 13, 16, 18 to 20 and 27 to 30, by: (a) facilitating interregional investigative forums; (b) promoting post-seizure actions; (c) delivering capacity-building for special investigative techniques, including controlled deliveries; (d) sharing knowledge on cocaine trafficking production processes; and (e) promoting formal and informal criminal justice cooperation through specialized drug prosecution networks.

15. CRIMJUST provides technical assistance to Member States and fosters interregional cooperation between criminal justice institutions to counter drug trafficking. Its focus lies specifically in enhancing criminal justice cooperation among countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, West Africa and the European Union to ensure that investigations into transnational drug trafficking crimes are pursued beyond interception activities. This entails providing tools, capacity development and technical assistance to facilitate collaboration among jurisdictions in pursuing investigations, prosecutions and matters related to proceeds of crime.

16. CRIMJUST interregional investigative case forums have been instrumental in promoting cross-border cooperation in criminal matters and providing post-seizure support to law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies. The activities that CRIMJUST has facilitated to date have brought together officials to discuss cocaine trafficking trends, study specific cocaine seizure cases and develop and agree on post-seizure actions to support prosecution. The investigative case forums provide an informal channel of communication to enable investigative and operational cooperation, facilitating intelligence-sharing and encouraging open discussions. They serve to

complement existing and forthcoming requests for mutual legal assistance by encouraging officials to discuss the challenges that they encounter and promoting best practices to investigate and prosecute transnational drug trafficking. The forums are facilitated in partnership with regional anti-drug prosecution networks.

17. In addition, CRIMJUST delivers technical assistance to Member States to enhance their use of special investigation techniques, including controlled deliveries, as defined in article 20 of the Convention, and the development of international cooperation manuals. These activities optimize criminal justice outcomes by ensuring that the focus of investigators goes beyond seizures and includes investigations, prosecution and the pursuit of assets obtained illegally by the organized criminal groups responsible for trafficking in the seized commodities.

18. During the reporting period, UNODC worked with countries in Latin America, namely, Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru, to establish and support the Regional Counter-Narcotics Intelligence Centre. Support is provided by drafting institutional documents that cover issues related to the exchange of criminal intelligence and the coordination of multilateral operations. Furthermore, the Office held meetings with experts from those countries to address practical issues related to the exchange of criminal intelligence and the coordination of operations targeting drug trafficking and related crimes.

19. To strengthen cooperation among law enforcement training institutions, UNODC continues to promote the Law Enforcement Training Network, which serves as a platform for the exchange of training curricula, materials, methodologies, trainers and best practices among training and educational institutions in the field of law enforcement. In coordination with the United Nations police, work continued to develop training tools and materials on criminal intelligence analysis and related topics. Subject to the availability of funds, future plans include the development of a database and the establishment of a common website to streamline and simplify access to training materials and information about institutions and other topics.

20. The Container Control Programme builds capacity in countries seeking to improve risk management, supply chain security and trade facilitation at seaports, airports and land border crossings in order to prevent the illicit cross-border movement of goods such as drugs, weapons, wildlife and forest products and precursor chemicals for drugs and explosives. A core element of the Programme is the establishment of port control units and air cargo control units composed of, ideally, front-line officers from various law enforcement agencies, to foster inter-agency cooperation. Following thorough theoretical and practical training, the units may also receive advanced specialized training on such topics as strategic trade and export control, drugs and their precursors, and wildlife crime. The Programme supports activities in more than 70 Member States, with more than 129 port and air cargo control units across the Black Sea and South Caucasus region, Central, South and South-East Asia, East and Southern Africa, West Africa, the Gulf States, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, Oceania and South-Eastern Europe.

21. The seizure results highlight the effectiveness and relevance of the Container Control Programme. In 2021 alone, port and air cargo control units around the world reported a total of 1,416 seizures. They included 171 tons of cocaine, 2.2 tons of heroin, 1,146 kg of cannabis, 200 kg of opium, 341 kg of synthetic drugs, 14,014,100 pieces of psychotropic substances, 162 tons of precursor chemicals, 570,000 items of strategic goods (including guns, ammunition and drones, and 100 tons of ammonium nitrate), numerous illicit shipments of wildlife goods (including 3.2 tons of bones from protected animal species, 29 tons of protected timber and 24 tons of items from crimes in the fisheries sector) and illicit waste. These seizures keep profits and dangerous goods out of the hands of organized criminal groups and non-State actors, while also enhancing the security and development of Member States.

22. As the Container Control Programme looks to the future, it will continue to adapt and respond to new and emerging cross-border challenges. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has emphasized the integral role played by the containerized trade supply chain for national economies and underlined the importance of efficient border controls that do not impede licit trade. The Programme is committed to continuing to support Member States in balancing the need to detect and intercept suspicious consignments against the need for efficient legal trade.

23. The Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation was launched in June 2018 and is implemented by a consortium consisting of UNODC and INTERPOL. Within UNODC, the Programme is implemented under the Border Management Branch by the Global Programme on Crimes Affecting the Environment and the Container Control Programme, as well as by the Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism. Together with the evolving national task forces, the Programme provides one of the broadest international efforts in place to combat illegal deforestation and transnational organized crime.

24. The Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation has developed a solid foundation for effectively supporting law enforcement and prosecution entities to detect, investigate and prevent transnational forest crime by supporting task forces and investigation teams and implementing wide-ranging activities. These activities include the development and mentoring of investigative units and teams to disrupt the finances linked to illegal deforestation, the training of customs officials to identify and seize illegal timber shipments, the provision of operational support to competent authorities, the training of judges to strengthen prosecutorial responses and the strengthening of civil society and private sector networks and their abilities to reduce illicit timber supply chains and subsequently protect indigenous communities and their lands.

25. The Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation has delivered training on wood identification, risk indicators, document fraud, financial disruption, investigative tools for corporate crimes and prosecution methods and has supported Container Control Programme port control units in the identification of illegal shipments of timber. In 2021 alone, more than 160 officers from relevant agencies, including customs agencies, police forces, forest agencies and port authorities, were trained in wood identification, selection of high-risk timber shipments and inspection of containers. The Programme also conducted a comprehensive study of judicial processes and outcomes in Brazil, with the ultimate objective of developing courses and manuals for prosecutors, judges and public servants working in the judicial sector.

26. Customs officers trained by the Container Control Programme and the Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation have engaged in a significant amount of timber seizures and back-tracking investigations. In May 2021, customs officers in Hong Kong, China, seized 211 tons of wood from an endangered tree species with an estimated market value of about \$1.1 million. It was one of the largest seizures of wood made by customs officers in Hong Kong, China, over the past five years. The results of the training are also reflected in the seizures made by authorities in South-East Asia, which include 10 tons (12 square metres) of red sandalwood, more than 1,000 square metres of West African sandalwood (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*, listed in appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), 23,000 kg of Western sandalwood, 38 square metres of jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) and misdeclared teak wood furniture. In Latin America, several seizures have been made by authorities in Colombia, most recently a shipment of 15 containers (330 square metres) of illegally sourced timber.

27. The Airport Communication Project is a UNODC initiative, implemented in partnership with INTERPOL and WCO, aimed at strengthening the capacity of airports to detect and intercept high-risk passengers and illicit goods in countries of

origin, transit and destination. The Project is implemented through multi-agency and nationally owned joint airport interdiction task forces based in international airports, real-time secure communication among those task forces through the Customs Enforcement Network Communication Platform of WCO, connection to INTERPOL I-24/7 and national databases, and regular training and mentoring activities.

28. The Airport Communication Project contributes to the disruption of the illicit flows of all types of drugs and goods, the interception of foreign terrorist fighters and the detection of victims of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants through communication, information-sharing and trust-building among law enforcement agencies. Through its support for the efficient management of international airports and by virtue of the nexus existing between peace, security and development, the Project also actively participates in the economic development of the regions in which it operates.

29. As of June 2022, the Airport Communication Project is active in 41 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean and South-Eastern Europe and is supporting the operationalization of 34 joint airport interdiction task forces (with some under establishment). The Project has also been supporting law enforcement agencies at international airports in Cambodia and Viet Nam since 2021. The joint airport interdiction task forces have recorded seizures of 10.38 tons of cocaine, 8 tons of cannabis, 2.1 tons of methamphetamine, 630 kg of heroin, 142 kg of amphetamine, 1.5 ton of precursors, 19.9 tons of falsified medical products, 1.8 tons of pangolin scales, 663 kg of ivory, 274 kg of gold, undeclared currency totalling \$30.1 million and hundreds of firearms. They have also intercepted possible foreign terrorist fighters, persons wanted by INTERPOL or the Federal Bureau of Investigations of the United States of America and potential victims of trafficking in persons and have disrupted smuggling of migrants networks.

30. In the coming years, the Airport Communication Project will continue to develop the capacity of its joint airport interdiction task forces on the collection, use and analysis of advance passenger information and passenger name records to enhance the capacities for identification, detection and interception of known and unknown high-risk passengers, including foreign terrorist fighters travelling by air.

31. The Airport Communication Project will continue to keep its joint airport interdiction task forces up to date about emerging threats, new trafficked commodities and related crimes, such as wildlife crime, trafficking in minerals, in particular gold and precious metals, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, trafficking in cultural property and trafficking in synthetic drugs and opioids. Similarly, post-seizure investigations and aspects relating to integrity will be central axes of development. Finally, despite an increase in the number of women leading joint airport interdiction task forces (a total of eight in 2022), gender will continue to be a key focus of implementation of the Project, with new training modules and activities and the creation of regional forums for women of the Airport Communication Project network.

E. Gender mainstreaming

32. The Global Programme on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the United Nations Office at Vienna and UNODC and the Gender Team in the Office of the Director-General/Executive Director have put in place a framework for UNODC to systematically mainstream gender throughout all processes, activities and programmes. The Gender Team focuses on four pillars of work: (a) institutional accountability mechanisms; (b) capacity-building; (c) knowledge products; and (d) inter-agency cooperation. As part of these four pillars, the Global Programme supports skills development on gender issues relevant to the UNODC mandate and carries out awareness-raising activities to address the challenges of UNODC mostly operating in male-dominated fields where gender aspects have often not been considered. The activities under the Global Programme have been able to support the

opening up of new areas of work that have often been less explored, such as the analysis of gender aspects in the Organized Crime Convention. With the launch of their second Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2022–2026), the United Nations Office at Vienna and UNODC will continue to be at the forefront of research and understanding of gender as it relates to organized crime, while focusing on new priority areas, such as an intersectional approach to gender equality and women’s empowerment, increased male engagement in activities and the field-specific implementation of gender-mainstreaming efforts.

33. In 2020, under the Global Programme on Addressing Prison Challenges, UNODC published the *Toolkit on Gender-Responsive Non-Custodial Measures*, which is focused on, among others, the subject of women arrested for drug-related crime. The toolkit promotes proportionate sentencing frameworks that distinguish between the type of drugs and scale of the illicit activity and the role and motivation of the women in conflict with the law (serious or organized traffickers, micro-traffickers (low-level dealers or smugglers), women who are dependent on drugs and women who use drugs occasionally (or “recreationally”). In 2021, UNODC conducted technical needs assessments and workshops to support criminal justice institutions in Thailand and Viet Nam to roll out the toolkit, followed by a high-level meeting on the New Narcotics Code of Thailand.

III. Technical assistance in the implementation of the Protocols

A. Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants

34. The Global Programme against Trafficking in Persons and the Global Programme against the Smuggling of Migrants support countries to accede to and implement the Organized Crime Convention, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Through these programmes, UNODC trains and mentors practitioners, assists countries in developing and strengthening laws, policies and action plans, develops innovative tools to expand the knowledge base, provides substantive support to United Nations bodies and organs and inter-agency mechanisms working on combating trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and builds networks to promote national and international cooperation to effectively address these crimes and protect the rights of trafficking victims and smuggled migrants.

35. In 2021 alone, the global programmes trained more than 3,600 criminal justice practitioners, government officials and civil society representatives and reached more than 30 countries with targeted technical cooperation activities at the national level. Among the results of this assistance, in Colombia, a series of training sessions on the use of the mechanism for identification and referral of cases of trafficking in persons, in particular in relation to Venezuelan nationals, resulted in three operations by law enforcement officials and a labour inspection that led to the arrest of 17 suspects and the rescue of 63 victims of trafficking in persons; 40 of the victims had been subject to labour exploitation and 23, including 7 children, to sexual exploitation. The global programmes have also published key studies: (a) *The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons and Responses to the Challenges*; (b) *The Concept of “Harbouring” in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol*; (c) *Abused and Neglected: A Gender Perspective on Aggravated Migrant Smuggling Offences and Response*; (d) *Female Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation as Defendants: A Case Law Analysis*; (e) *Compendium of Promising Practices on Public-Private Partnerships to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons*; and (f) “COVID-19 and the smuggling of migrants: a call for safeguarding the rights of smuggled migrants facing increased risks and vulnerabilities”. Moreover, support was provided to crucial intergovernmental processes such as the third appraisal of the United Nations Global

Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons by the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

36. The Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants in Asia and the Middle East is a joint initiative by the European Union and UNODC, implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq and Pakistan. The Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, Bangladesh, is a parallel joint initiative by the European Union and UNODC that is implemented in partnership with IOM, led by the Government of Bangladesh. Both programmes provide targeted, innovative and demand-driven technical assistance to support accession to and implementation of the Organized Crime Convention, the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, and the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol. The core objective of the programmes is to support Member States and practitioners in the prevention and prosecution of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and the protection of the rights of people who fall prey to the perpetrators of those crimes, and to promote cooperation among Member States in that regard.

37. Since its launch, in 2019, the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants in Asia and the Middle East has facilitated 79 national and 23 regional workshops on national policy and strategy development, legislative assistance, capacity-building and regional and international cooperation, as well as on the identification, screening and referral of victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants in vulnerable situations. In 2021 alone, the initiative trained 1,488 criminal justice practitioners, government officials and civil society representatives (553 female, 933 male, 2 preferred not to say). The focus on advancing women's representation and promoting gender-responsive criminal justice ensures that women are placed at the forefront of combating crime and protecting rights. Sustained advocacy on the need to include women in the criminal justice response to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants led to the constitution of the Global Action Women's Network of Gender Champions against Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling. Since its launch in 2020, the Women's Network has become a vibrant community of practitioners and has become a powerful vehicle for change.

38. In 2021, the Global Programme on Strengthening Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses to Violence against Women supported the development of a quick reference guide for first responders on the identification of gender-based violence in rescued victims of trafficking in persons in Namibia and South Africa.

B. Trafficking in firearms

39. Through its Firearms Trafficking Section, which implements the Global Firearms Programme, UNODC continues to promote the ratification and implementation of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

40. The work follows an integrated approach based on five pillars, which constitute a comprehensive framework for action against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

41. Under the first pillar, UNODC supports legislative harmonization efforts and the development and enhancement of national policies and normative frameworks through awareness-raising and legislative assistance by holding drafting workshops and providing gap analysis and specialized tools designed to support the ratification and implementation of the Firearms Protocol. During the reporting period, the Office provided legislative support to 16 countries to reinforce national firearms regimes.

42. In order to support the implementation of preventive and security measures, which is the second pillar, UNODC supports the marking and registration of firearms

by providing marking machines and record-keeping tools that allow for better accountability and increase the capacities of national authorities to trace firearms. Notably, the Office is in the final steps of developing “goIFAR”, an integrated firearms registry system that can be provided to interested States as a national record-keeping software.

43. Strengthening the criminal justice response of Member States constitutes the third pillar, with targeted training activities focused on the detection, investigation and prosecution of complex domestic and transnational cases of firearms trafficking and their links to organized crime and terrorist activities, including through the establishment of joint investigative teams. Regional cross-border operations in West Africa and Latin America, in collaboration with INTERPOL, have brought together hundreds of police officers and led to the seizure of more than 200,000 firearms. The current development of guidelines for the investigation and prosecution of trafficking in firearms, which is being undertaken as a participatory process with experts from more than 30 countries, is aimed at further enhancing investigative and prosecutorial capacities.

44. Under the fourth pillar, UNODC fosters international cooperation and the exchange of information to address the transnational dimension of trafficking in firearms at both the judicial and law enforcement levels and, through its community of practitioners, actively promotes the transfer of knowledge, good practices and lessons learned.

45. Lastly, under the fifth pillar, UNODC focuses on research and analysis to enhance intelligence on and the overall understanding of trafficking in firearms and its criminal context for the development of evidence-based policies on illicit arms flows. The UNODC Monitoring Illicit Arms Flows initiative supports the global monitoring of target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

IV. Technical assistance regarding serious crime

A. Cybercrime

46. The Global Programme on Cybercrime provides technical assistance in preventing and countering cyber-dependent and cyber-enabled crimes. Support to Member States is based on four pillars: (a) prevention; (b) capacity-building; (c) cooperation; and (d) legal framework. Cybercrime teams are based in El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Senegal and Thailand, as well as at UNODC headquarters in Vienna, and provide global and regional support.

47. Under the prevention pillar, UNODC provides awareness-raising initiatives focusing on vulnerable groups (children, women and the elderly). The Office has developed a wide range of prevention materials, including for exhibit in schools and museums, puppet shows and graffiti in vulnerable communities. Materials are being made accessible for persons with disabilities. In Latin America, UNODC developed specialized tools and training to educate 124,553 school children, young women and men, parents, educators, government officials and private actors on online sexual abuse and exploitation, cyberbullying and sextortion. Online portals were launched in Belize, El Salvador and Guatemala to report child sexual abuse material.

48. Strengthening the criminal justice response of Member States in countering cybercrime is the core of the Global Programme on Cybercrime. In 2021, the Programme provided technical support to 47 Member States. First responders, investigators, prosecutors, digital forensics experts and judges received advice, mentoring and training in darknet investigations, special investigative techniques, legal standards, digital forensics, digital evidence, cryptocurrencies, malware and ransomware and online child sexual abuse and exploitation, among others. In 2021, UNODC supported the establishment of digital forensic laboratories in Belize and Peru and a cryptocurrency analysis laboratory in Malaysia.

49. Together with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, UNODC developed a 12-week training course on the investigation of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, reaching more than 1,000 criminal justice practitioners from 63 countries in all five regions of the world.

50. UNODC also promotes international and inter-agency cooperation. Regional meetings to exchange best practices and study visits of investigators, judges and prosecutors to specialized units were organized. In West Africa, a digital forensics competition was launched. A network of women in the cyber field, which allows for meetings among professionals from 10 African countries, was also established. UNODC acts as a bridge with the private sector, including Internet service providers, for national institutions seeking to improve the response against cybercrime. As a result of the cooperation efforts, for the first time, El Salvador conducted an international criminal operation against a criminal network distributing online child sexual abuse material in Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan and Viet Nam.

51. Under the legal framework pillar, UNODC supports the development of analysis and procedural rules. During the reporting period, *Darknet Cybercrime Threats to Southeast Asia* and “The online trafficking of synthetic drugs and synthetic opioids in Latin America and the Caribbean” were published. A tailored guide on interpreting digital evidence admissibility rules was also developed for El Salvador.

B. Crimes that affect the environment

52. UNODC, through its Global Programme on Crimes that Affect the Environment and Climate, assists Member States to prevent and respond to wildlife and forest crime, crimes in the fisheries sector, illegal mining and trafficking in precious metals and waste. Crimes that affect the environment are serious organized crime with far-reaching impacts for the economy, security, the environment and human health, contributing to biodiversity loss and climate change.

53. A “crime scene to court” approach is utilized, providing support to Member States to prevent, identify, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate crimes that affect the environment more effectively. UNODC works in close coordination with national authorities – ranging from law enforcement and criminal justice agencies to wildlife, forestry and fisheries management authorities and other relevant agencies. In 2021 alone, training courses reached over 2,900 criminal justice personnel in more than 30 countries.

54. UNODC continued its successful collaboration under the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime and fostered new inter-agency partnerships. The Safety across Asia For the global Environment (SAFE) project was launched in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other stakeholders to improve understanding of the linkages between wildlife crime and the emergence of zoonotic diseases. In collaboration with UNEP, UNODC launched another new initiative, entitled “Unwaste: tackling waste trafficking to support a circular economy”, to bring together experts and policymakers to fight against waste trafficking between the European Union and South-East Asia.

55. UNODC developed new resource materials to support Member State capacity, including rapid reference guides for investigators and prosecutors of wildlife and forest crime and crimes in the fisheries sector. The Office continued to engage with academia to produce teaching material for the university module series on wildlife crime, designed to assist academics in teaching classes on those topics, both in person and online. Efforts were also made to engage and raise awareness of wildlife crime, climate change and plastic pollution through the publication of a book that is aimed at children aged 8–11, their parents and teachers.

56. Regional and international cooperation were promoted, including by supporting wildlife enforcement networks and the African Wildlife Forensics Network and by hosting wildlife interregional enforcement meetings.

57. Urgent action and political commitment are required if the global community is to protect the planet. UNODC continued its efforts to mainstream crime prevention and criminal justice into the biodiversity and nature agendas through engagement with inter-agency mechanisms and intergovernmental processes. UNODC will continue to raise the awareness and capacity of Member States to combat crimes that affect the environment, contributing to efforts to address the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution.

C. Maritime crime

58. The Global Maritime Crime Programme continues to support Member States in combating piracy and maritime crime through the capacity development of criminal justice actors to respond to crime at sea and by building cooperation to tackle what are innately complex and international maritime threats. The Programme's approach to capacity development is aimed at ensuring an end-to-end criminal justice response to crime at sea, from deterrence and detection to interdiction and prosecution. Building on the long-standing success of regional maritime law enforcement training centres in Seychelles and Sri Lanka, the Programme established new training centres in Bangladesh, Cyprus, Ghana, Indonesia, Maldives, Nigeria and Trinidad and Tobago. These training centres promote not only skills development in all aspects of small boat operations but also the standardization and interoperability of enforcement actions at the national and regional levels. Long-term mentoring in vessel maintenance and operational planning and execution continue at the national level in Somalia and Yemen. Extensive regional and inter-agency training on maritime domain awareness has been delivered in South-East Asia, South Asia and West Africa and has strengthened regional information-sharing and a common approach to tackling maritime crime. The Programme also supports Member States in improving their capacity to prosecute maritime crime cases. Work has been carried out on legal reforms, in particular in West Africa, with the adoption of counter-piracy legislation. Case-based learning is ongoing through simulated trials covering a broad range of conventional and emerging maritime crimes and in mutual legal assistance through prosecutors' networks under the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime and the Caribbean Forum on Maritime Crime.

59. Supporting cooperation to enable responses to regional and international challenges is a key aspect of the work of the Global Maritime Crime Programme. The Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime works on thematic areas including piracy, maritime drug trafficking and crime in the fisheries sector and is involved in UNODC work pursuant to Security Council resolution [2607 \(2021\)](#), such as coordinating responses against illicit maritime flows and the financing of Al-Shabaab, including through the Somali charcoal trade. The Caribbean Forum on Maritime Crime brings together maritime law enforcers, legal advisers and prosecutors to develop effective responses to maritime crime in the Caribbean basin. In the Pacific Ocean, the Programme leads efforts to counter maritime crime in the Sulu and Celebes Seas by convening a trilateral contact group, promotes maritime diplomacy through its Maritime Law Enforcement Dialogue series and coordinates responses to maritime drug trafficking under the auspices of specific working groups.

60. Benefiting from a strong field presence and the trust of Member States, international organizations and seafarers, the Global Maritime Crime Programme team is present in courtrooms, prosecution offices and ports and onboard coastguard vessels of Member States around the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans and in the Caribbean, Mediterranean and Red Seas. The Programme has recently expanded its reach to work with new Member States in the Pacific and the Mediterranean. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Programme expanded under a regional programme for Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Panama that focuses on strengthening

operational capacities to counter crime on rivers and legal responses to maritime crime utilizing the tools offered by the Organized Crime Convention to foster mutual legal assistance and cooperation.

61. Through its hands-on and evolving approach to technical assistance and cooperation, the Global Maritime Crime Programme continues to contribute to the work of the United Nations in reducing the impact of transnational organized crime in order to create an environment conducive to sustainable development and peace.

V. Data analysis

62. In the past two years, UNODC has released several global and regional analytical documents that are aimed at improving policy and operational responses to different forms of transnational organized crime. In late 2020, UNODC published *Measuring Organized Crime in the Western Balkans*, which contains a statistical and conceptual framework for assessing and evaluating the involvement of organized crime in different markets. The *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020* includes data from 148 countries and provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the global, regional and national levels, based primarily on trafficking cases detected between 2016 and 2019. It also includes four thematic chapters, on the link between poor socioeconomic conditions and vulnerability to recruitment into trafficking, child trafficking, trafficking for forced labour and the role of technology in recruitment and exploitation. UNODC also launched the Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants, a pilot project to assess the characteristics, drivers and impacts of migrant smuggling in rapidly changing contexts through regular field research in origin, transit and destination countries, with people on the move, law enforcement, civil society and other key actors.

63. Looking to the future, UNODC will seek to increase the agility and adaptability of its research into organized crime to respond to quickly changing developments on the ground. This has already been evidenced in data and analysis on the COVID-19 pandemic and the Office's response to evolving mandates in circumstances of conflict and war. In this regard, a series of research briefs were produced, showcasing an effort to collect data and explore the longer-term consequences of the pandemic on drugs and crime. The research briefs contain an examination of the impact of COVID-19 on organized crime, the drug supply chain, trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in falsified COVID-19-related medical products and violence. In the context of the war in Ukraine, UNODC also released an analytical brief on the potential risks associated with trafficking in persons within conflict-affected countries, and about trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants affecting people fleeing conflict.

VI. Conclusion and possible recommendations

64. The technical assistance that UNODC provides to States to implement the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto is embedded in the targets of the 2030 Agenda across multiple Sustainable Development Goals. However, as development is a long-term and continuous process, so is the fight against organized crime.

65. Universal adherence to the Organized Crime Convention is a goal within reach. The challenges lie in the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto and in addressing the evolving methods and forms of organized crime. Recognizing that any treaty is only as good as its implementation, UNODC continues to deliver a broad range of technical assistance through its existing global, regional and country programmes, covering a wide thematic portfolio to combat transnational organized crime in all its forms and manifestations.

66. An intersectional gender-based approach to combat transnational organized crime is important to fully implement the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto. Such an approach allows legislators, policymakers and practitioners working in the field to understand the different reasons behind men and women participating in organized crime and how their gender roles shape the roles they carry out in organized criminal groups, to further understand how men and women may experience the criminal justice system differently and the differing impacts of policies and programmes on men and women, and to formulate appropriate responses accordingly.

67. The Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention may wish to consider inviting States parties to increase the level of financial contributions provided to UNODC in order to facilitate the implementation of the observations emanating from the Implementation Review Mechanism to enhance the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto.
