

Ghada Waly
UNODC Executive Director

**11th Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations
Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
Monday, 17 October 2022**

Your Excellency Mr. Taneti Maamau,

President of Kiribati,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Baker Fattah Hussen,

President of the 11th Session of the Conference of Parties,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you today at this 11th Session of the COP to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

When this Conference last convened, we were in the middle of the COVID pandemic, and were facing its restrictions and ramifications.

Now, as the world recovers from the pandemic, a different global context is taking shape, rife with challenges ranging from conflicts to climate change to economic instability.

We have seen criminal groups prey on crises in different corners of the world, from Haiti to the Sahel and beyond.

Such crises are causes and symptoms of a more uncertain world, prone to unpredictable shocks.

The IMF's World Uncertainty Index reached unprecedented levels during the initial outbreak of the COVID pandemic and saw a sharp rise again this year at the onset of the conflict in Ukraine.

The past five decades have seen a fivefold increase in natural disasters around the world.

More and more people are even becoming uncertain of where their next meal will come from, with the number of people affected by hunger more than doubling over the past three years.

Uncertainty undermines security and the rule of law, strains resources, and deepens fragility.

It can leave institutions paralyzed and people vulnerable, while organized crime thrives.

The UNTOC and its Protocols represent powerful tools to build the resilience of States and societies to crime.

It is time to step up implementation, in the face of evolving and emerging organized crime threats.

With almost a quarter of the world's population living in conflict areas, and the costs of essential goods rising and fluctuating, more people are resorting to migrant smugglers, and at risk of exploitation by traffickers, in their desperation to escape their conditions.

The UNTOC and its Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking Protocols provide important practical measures that can be better implemented to prosecute perpetrators, dismantle criminal networks, and help victims and people at risk.

Trafficking in firearms continues to fuel instability, allowing armed and criminal groups to acquire weapons and circumvent sanctions, driving violence and prolonging conflict.

Greater adoption and use of the Firearms Protocol, and the accountability frameworks that it offers, can make a great difference in stopping weapons from reaching the wrong hands.

And as countries around the world continue to face financial volatility, the UNTOC can be leveraged more effectively to trace, freeze, seize and confiscate proceeds of organized crime.

Dismantling organized criminal enterprises can also serve to disrupt and combat terrorist groups, who often engage in or collude with organized crime to support their operations.

The Convention is also flexible enough to address emerging areas of priorities.

During the last session, you affirmed the relevance of the UNTOC in fighting crimes that affect the environment, as the world faces climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

This year, we are witnessing growing global momentum to clamp down on trafficking in cultural property, an area where criminal justice responses remain lacking, and the UNTOC remains underused.

Through the work of this Conference, and your normative discussions and resolutions, you can put the implementation of the Convention on the right track.

One of the most important tools in stepping up implementation is the UNTOC Review Mechanism.

183 States Parties are already officially engaged in peer reviews, and all States Parties will be engaged by the end of the year.

The review process is crucial to identify real gaps and technical assistance needs, and to elevate your individual and collective ability to implement.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime is supporting hundreds of national experts in setting up communication channels and understanding the requirements of the Mechanism, and I encourage you all to ensure that you have designated focal points, and to engage actively and constructively.

In parallel, UNODC is developing its technical assistance to meet your needs in combatting organized crime.

We have undertaken organizational changes, such as establishing a new Border Management Branch and expanding our work on crimes that affect the environment, and we continue to provide tailored technical assistance to effectively implement the UNTOC and its Protocols.

Through research briefs, flagship reports and the drug monitoring platform, we are also providing information and analysis to help anticipate and address drug and crime challenges wherever they happen.

UNODC is committed to working with you to keep pace with organized crime threats.

Excellencies,

The international community believes in the UNTOC. The overwhelming majority of the world's countries are now States Parties, and more than 1,400 participants are taking part in this year's Conference.

Your commitment is shared by important partners, including civil society, who are represented in this Conference in record numbers, as well as academia and the private sector.

They provide unique perspectives and help find solutions, and I encourage you to work with them.

I would like to thank Ambassador El-Molla of Egypt, for his admirable leadership of this Conference throughout the past two years, through many difficulties, and I wish Ambassador Hussen a successful and fruitful Presidency.

In the face of global uncertainty, this Conference and its Parties can build resilience to organized crime and unlock the full potential of the UNTOC.

Thank you.