

Statement under Agenda item 1 (b) general discussion

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime

Mr. President, Vice President, distinguished delegates,

I am speaking on behalf of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, an international civil society organization headquartered in Geneva, with staff and offices around the world. We focus on research and analysis on all types of illicit markets, and on putting in place more strategic and effective responses.

Since the adoption of the UNCAC, and its sister convention, the UNTOC, the strength of corrupt and criminal networks has grown and evolved beyond recognition.

Our 2023 Organized Crime Index shows that the most prevalent and potent group of organized criminal actors are those that are embedded in the state.

The criminal underworld is increasingly indistinguishable from the upperworlds of politics and business, to the point that the greatest enablers of illicit behaviour have become legal.

Whether through lax financial regulation, the proliferation of special economic zones, or the ability of states to undermine or manipulate the very measures that they are obligated to implement under this convention - it has become too easy for those within states to act with impunity.

That is why we refer to **organized corruption** as the phenomenon of this abuse of power and use of money to extract resources and exploit societies.

Despite the widespread ratification of both conventions, it is increasingly evident that international efforts have not been effective enough. More than 20 years into the lives of the UNTOC and UNCAC, and as we get nearer to the target achievement date of the SDGs in 2030, the situation is critical and things have gotten worse, not better.

Our research shows time and time again that the strongest indicators of resilience to organized crime and corruption are the rule of law, democratic systems, and a free media and a civil society that is able to operate and work with partners across sectors to monitor and follow up on the implementation of the obligations to which states have committed, and which are essential in formulating an effective legal and regulatory framework to counter corruption.

These are all principles that are enshrined within the conventions.

But the review mechanism of this convention and the UNTOC allow states to mark their own homework. Incentives for positive performance are weak, and there are no penalties for non-compliance.

In the view of the Global Initiative, therefore, it is time to ensure data, inputs and actions from civil society form a more integral part of the implementation of this and other relevant conventions, to support states in achieving the goals to which they have signed up.

Thank you.