



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

Distr.: General  
10 August 2006

Original: English

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Third session

Vienna, 9-18 October 2006

Item 7 of the provisional agenda\*

**Consideration of mechanisms for achieving  
the objectives of the Conference of the  
Parties in accordance with article 32,  
paragraphs 3-5, of the Convention**

## **Improving crime data collection, research and analysis with a view to enhancing the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant international entities**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

1. The Secretary-General hereby draws the attention of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols to the report of the meeting of the open-ended expert group on ways and means to improve crime data collection, research and analysis with a view to enhancing the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant international entities (see E/CN.15/2006/4), which was held in Vienna from 8 to 10 February 2006, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/23 of 22 July 2005.
2. In line with the conclusions and recommendations of the expert group, and in view of the approach taken in the Organized Crime Convention not to develop a definition of organized crime, a dialogue with the Conference of the Parties to the Convention should be initiated in order to develop a foundation of understanding about the scope of this concept for data collection purposes. This could include the development of adequate indicators to produce qualitative and quantitative measurement of organized crime.
3. As recommended by the expert group, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is considering the revision of the current data collection instrument (the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal

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\* CTOC/COP/2006/1.



Justice Systems, now in its ninth edition), with a view to enabling reporting on offences covered by the Organized Crime Convention and its Protocols.

4. At present, information on the extent of organized crime phenomena is scarce and often dominated by information originating from the developed world. There is, in contrast, a general lack of knowledge on the nature and extent of organized crime in the developing world.

5. Consolidated information on emerging trends in organized crime seems to be indispensable for setting goals, allocating resources and evaluating results. However, the collection of such information remains a challenge because of the methodological difficulties associated with studying problems that are primarily hidden.

6. Two studies on the phenomenon at the global comparative level date back to 1998 and 2000.<sup>1</sup> At the regional level, the European Police Office (Europol) and the Council of Europe issue regular overviews of trends in organized crime.<sup>2</sup> No international organization, including Interpol, publishes regular global reports on the subject.

7. The European Commission has undertaken a number of activities towards the development of statistics on organized crime. The European Forum on the Prevention of Organized Crime, established by the Directorate-General on Justice, Freedom and Security, organized a meeting on measuring organized crime, where researchers met policy-makers to discuss concepts, indicators and tools, in February 2006. Four projects funded by the European Commission deal with issues related to the production, collection and analysis of comparable information on organized crime, namely Project EUSTOC (European Union statistical apparatus for measuring organized crime); Project IKOC (Improving Knowledge of Organized Crime); Project AOC (Assessing Organized Crime); and a study to assess the scope and collect available statistics and meta-data on five types of crime and propose harmonized definitions and collection procedures for these types of crime for the European Union member States and acceding countries.

8. As regards trafficking in persons, the UNODC report *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns* of April 2006 highlighted that there was currently no comprehensive measure of incidence or prevalence of human trafficking. The 2006 *Trafficking in Persons Report* produced by the Department of State of the United States of America focuses mostly on assessing efforts of Governments in preventing and fighting trafficking rather than measuring the extent of the phenomenon. The flow of smuggling of migrants is also insufficiently documented at the international level.

9. There is thus a significant gap in the available data on trends in international organized crime, which, when filled, would greatly benefit the process of information sharing outlined in the Organized Crime Convention.

10. Two alternative approaches may be applicable for the purpose of gathering internationally comparable information on organized crime, in terms of improving the collection, exchange and analysis of information on the nature of organized crime (art. 28 of the Convention). In the absence of a defined research problem, indirect information could become available through the collection of data on selected related crimes (proxies) to be followed by accurate contextual analysis.

Alternatively, an operational description of the key manifestations of organized crime for the purpose of data collection could be agreed upon by the Conference of the Parties.

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> See Sabrina Adamoli et al, *Organized Crime Around the World* (Helsinki, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, 1998); and *International Crime Threat Assessment* (Washington, D.C., United States Government inter-agency working group in support of and pursuant to the President's International Crime Control Strategy, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> The latest reports as at August 2006 are the *European Union Organized Crime Threat Assessment 2006* (Europol, 2006) and the *Organized crime situation report 2005: focus on the threat of economic crime* (Council of Europe, 2005).

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