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United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime

Executive summary

Transnational organized crime is an increasingly complex, multidimensional and hyperglobalized challenge, affecting all countries and regions, driving violence and insecurity and harming people and the planet.

Responding to the call of the Secretary-General and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to work together more coherently to tackle all components of transnational organized crime, the United Nations system common approach to prevent and address such crime is aimed at assisting United Nations entities to better align and coordinate effective transnational organized crime-related support for Member States.

The common approach represents a shared understanding that United Nations system responses to preventing and addressing transnational organized crime must keep a focus on the immediate needs of people for security, justice and well-being, to support balanced and specific responses to the endangerment of physical safety and crime threats, while promoting interventions and cross-sectoral partnerships that can help strengthen prevention and resilience to transnational organized crime and avoiding duplication with existing and ongoing interventions.

The common approach was elaborated by a time-bound task team comprising 23 United Nations system entities, operating within the framework of the High-level Committee on Programmes under the leadership of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The task team conducted a mapping of United Nations system responses to transnational organized crime and agreed on a conceptual framework that underpinned work to develop the common approach.



The resulting recommendations and joint actions are aimed at addressing the challenges and response gaps identified through this process, including data limitations, fragmentation and coordination challenges, as well as capacity and resource constraints, with the ultimate aim of supporting effective responses to transnational organized crime that are evidence-based, context-specific, balanced and comprehensive, addressing structural drivers while building resilience.

Focusing on supporting the United Nations system in speaking and acting as one against transnational organized crime, enhancing data collection, sharing and analysis, developing common messaging, as relevant, and promoting integrated programming, the common approach outlines six specific joint actions to be undertaken over the next four years:

- (a) A feasibility assessment for the joint sharing of data on transnational organized crime;
- (b) A regional pilot to implement the common approach in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- (c) An initiative against financial crime and illicit financial flows;
- (d) A database of transnational organized crime-related legislation;
- (e) Data collection on the environmental impacts of transnational organized crime;
- (f) Joint messaging on transnational organized crime for use by United Nations system principals and resident coordinators.

The common approach further proposes creating a standing inter-agency coordination mechanism outside of the Committee, led by UNODC with rotating co-chairs, to support implementation.

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I. Introduction

1. Transnational organized crime has increasingly come to the forefront of the international agenda amid growing recognition that such crime is getting worse. Transnational organized crime is affecting all parts of the world, diversifying and intensifying in scope and scale, driving violence and insecurity and harming people and the planet, at an enormous cost to human life and life opportunities.
2. The United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime responds to the call of the Secretary-General and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for the United Nations system to work together more coherently to tackle all components of organized crime by proposing pathways for entities to align and coordinate their support related to transnational organized crime to Member States.
3. The common approach represents a shared understanding that United Nations system responses to preventing and addressing transnational organized crime must keep a focus on the immediate needs of people for security, justice and well-being, to support balanced and specific responses to the endangerment of physical safety and criminal threats, while promoting interventions and cross-sectoral partnerships that can help strengthen prevention and resilience to transnational organized crime and avoiding duplication with existing and ongoing interventions. The actions contained in the common approach are proposed in a context of limited resources and with due account for the respective mandates and priorities of United Nations system entities, and are aimed at addressing existing gaps, leveraging synergies and providing support where such efforts and interventions are needed most, at the global as well as regional, subregional and country levels.

II. Context

4. The common approach is timely. The 9497th meeting of the Security Council, on threats to international peace and security, held on 7 December 2023,¹ was dedicated to transnational organized crime and resulted in a presidential statement calling for strengthening the coordination of United Nations actions.² Also in 2023, the High-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, tasked by the Secretary-General with identifying recommendations on global governance, called for a global strategy on transnational organized crime. In March 2024, the General Assembly adopted resolution 78/267, in which it declared 15 November the International Day for the Prevention of and Fight against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime.
5. In the Pact for the Future, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 79/1 of 22 September 2024, Heads of State and Government recognized that transnational organized crime and related illicit financial flows could pose a serious threat to international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development, including through the possible links that could exist in some cases between transnational organized crime and terrorist groups. To address this threat, Member States decided to:

- (a) Scale up efforts in addressing transnational organized crime and related illicit financial flows through comprehensive strategies, including prevention, early

¹ S/PV.9497 (Resumption 1).

² An analysis of Security Council resolutions found that, between 2022 and 2024, more than half of such resolutions mentioned some form of transnational organized crime. (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, available at <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/scresolutions>).

detection, investigation, protection and law enforcement, tackling the drivers, and engagement with relevant stakeholders;

(b) Strengthen international cooperation to prevent and combat transnational organized crime in all its forms, including when committed through the use of information and communications technology systems, welcoming the elaboration of the draft United Nations Convention against Cybercrime.

6. In May 2024, at its first regular session, CEB held a dedicated segment on the challenges posed by organized crime, with a focus on governance and the rule of law. United Nations system principals deliberated on the growing threat posed by transnational organized crime to sustainable development, noting that the phenomenon affected every country and the work of the entire United Nations system. The Board asked the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to lead a consultative process outlining how the United Nations system could work together more coherently to tackle the multiple dimensions of transnational organized crime that undermined the capacity of Governments and institutions to protect societies and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Subsequently, at its forty-eighth session, in October 2024, the High-level Committee on Programmes committed to developing a United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime and approved the terms of reference for the time-bound task team on transnational organized crime to be established under the leadership of UNODC.³

8. The process to develop the common approach has been swift, enabled by the high level of engagement demonstrated by United Nations system entities and a sense of urgency in responding to the growing challenges and new threats posed by transnational organized crime. A mapping⁴ of current United Nations system engagement on that issue and a gap analysis of responses were undertaken by the task team and presented to the Committee at its forty-ninth session,⁵ and a conceptual framework providing a working definition of transnational organized crime, outlining the scope and focus areas relating to such crime to be addressed under the common approach, was approved by Committee at an intersessional meeting in June 2025.

9. The work of the task team was further informed by a complementary workstream led by UNODC outside of the context of the Committee, consisting of three regional dialogues, in Ecuador (24 February 2025), Nigeria (28 April 2025) and Bangkok (6 May 2025), with relevant United Nations system entities, resident coordinators and other relevant organizations attending in-person and virtually. The dialogues captured field-based perspectives on local, national and regional manifestations of transnational organized crime and their impacts, as well as on

³ CEB/2024/6, para. 80 and annex III. The task team entities are as follows: UNODC (lead), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Development Coordination Office, Office of Counter-Terrorism, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Tourism Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations University (UNU), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Intellectual Property Organization.

⁴ https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/HLCP49-Mapping-UN_system_and_transnational_organized_crime.pdf.

⁵ CEB/2025/4.

Member State capacities, responses, challenges and policy needs. In addition, UNODC convened a group of high-level external experts (on 22 and 23 May 2025), including former government leaders and advisers, academics, practitioners and civil society representatives from all regions, to provide additional insights.

III. Purpose and scope of the common approach

10. As outlined in the task team's terms of reference, the common approach seeks to fulfil the following objectives:

(a) Promote policy coherence and aid the United Nations system leadership in advocating for and facilitating international cooperation and evidence-based responses to prevent and address transnational organized crime that are rooted in respect for international law, including respect for human rights and the rule of law;

(b) Facilitate inter-agency coordination, leverage data and analytical capacities, reduce duplication, optimize resource mobilization and maximize impact, including by leveraging existing relevant United Nations system work, processes and initiatives related to transnational organized crime;

(c) Contribute to the capacity of the resident coordinator system and United Nations country teams, as well as missions, to provide integrated, data-driven policy advice and support to Member States and regional bodies that address national and regional needs and priorities, and increase buy-in.

11. The common approach has been designed to be implementable, bridging global policy with integrated action on the ground that is rooted in international law and agreed international frameworks. Accordingly, it is aimed at articulating a shared understanding of transnational organized crime in order to enable the United Nations system to speak with one voice, connect the system's resources and draw upon its entities' diverse mandates more effectively through targeted coordination opportunities to support Member States and other stakeholders in addressing immediate needs and building sustainable responses to transnational organized crime. Furthermore, the common approach has been developed recognizing the need to align with existing relevant frameworks to ensure coherent responses to interlinked challenges.

12. To achieve these aims, the common approach puts forth a working definition of transnational organized crime, analysing the phenomenon through a human security lens,⁶ and provides a broad overview of the growing complexity of the problem, key trends and interlinkages, root causes, and its impacts on peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. The analysis and recommendations are rooted in the understanding that a United Nations system common approach must address the global North and global South, as transnational organized crime is a phenomenon affecting all countries, developed and developing, and take into account cross-cutting issues, including environmental concerns, gender, human rights and the misuse of technology, among other priorities. Avoiding overlap with existing mechanisms and interventions already addressing root causes and impacts related to

⁶ General Assembly resolution 66/290, third preambular paragraph and third operative paragraph ("Recognizing that development, human rights and peace and security, which are the three pillars of the United Nations, are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, [...] human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.") See also www.un.org/human-security/what-is-human-security.

transnational organized crime is critical to ensure effective use of limited resources and avoid duplication of effort.

IV. Understanding transnational organized crime

13. For the purpose of the common approach, transnational organized crime is broadly understood to encompass all serious profit-motivated criminal actions committed by a group to obtain a direct or indirect financial or other material benefit conducted across national borders.⁷ Perpetrators may include different criminal actors, including mafia-style groups, criminal networks, terrorist groups, non-State and State-embedded actors and private-sector actors, as well as other groups and persons providing services to transnational organized crime actors and participating in illicit activities such as money-laundering. Some, including people in marginalized communities, communities in fragile, conflict and crisis contexts, children and women, may be coerced or compelled into providing services or participating in crimes related to transnational organized crime.⁸

14. Transnational organized crime has emerged as one of the most complex and rapidly evolving threats facing Member States today, and its evolution reflects broader developments. Hyperglobalization, digital transformation and rising geopolitical volatility are contributing to the spread and growing sophistication of criminal networks. There exists an enormous diversity of criminal markets, often interlinked, with new markets rapidly developing where regulation or scarcity can open up opportunities for criminal exploitation. Rising violence and visibility of acts of violence, including notably in Europe, have further heightened concerns about transnational organized crime.⁹

15. States are the primary actors in preventing and addressing transnational organized crime. States may also be targeted or infiltrated by criminal groups through corruption and other means, and State actors may provide protection to criminal groups or engage directly in illicit markets.^{10, 11} Transnational organized crime weakens the rule of law and the capacity of the State, and is a driver and sustainer of conflict, exacerbating harms in conflict situations¹² and undermining international peace and security as well as development.¹³ Such crime seriously harms the environment and the economy, with people as the ultimate victims.

⁷ While the Organized Crime Convention, the primary international legal instrument addressing this challenge, does not define transnational organized crime, it defines an “organized criminal group” as a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing at least one serious crime, to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. (See General Assembly resolutions 55/25, annexes I–III, and 55/255, annex).

⁸ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020* (United Nations publication, 2020). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_15jan_web.pdf.

⁹ UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2023* (2023). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/Global_study_on_homicide_2023_web.pdf.

¹⁰ UNODC, *Inflection Point: Global Implications of Scam Centres, Underground Banking and Illicit Online Marketplaces in Southeast Asia* (United Nations publication, April 2025). Available at www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2025/Inflection_Point_2025.pdf.

¹¹ UNODC, *World Drug Report 2024* (United Nations publication, 2024). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR_2024/WDR24_Contemporary_issues.pdf.

¹² See <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm22073.doc.htm>.

¹³ Erica Gaston and Fiona Mangan, “Multilateral responses to transnational organized crime and conflict: global policy considerations and future directions (United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, August 2024). Available at <https://unu.edu/cpr/brief/multilateral-responses-transnational-organized-crime-and-conflict>.

16. No country or region is unaffected by transnational organized crime, and organized criminal groups operate in all environments, from small communities and villages to cities, on the high seas, and in financial capitals and warzones. While resilience to the deleterious impacts of transnational organized crime varies, such crime is rooted in and driven by supply and demand dynamics in the global North and in the global South.¹⁴ Challenges differ in different contexts and regions, but modern transnational organized criminal groups share core characteristics:

(a) **Adaptability and agility.** Transnational organized criminal groups have undergone significant structural transformations and are increasingly flexible and fluid in structure and in operations. A key trend across regions is the increasing use of “service providers” – specialized entities that manage specific parts of illicit supply chains, provide money-laundering services or offer “cybercrime-as-a-service” – creating interconnected networks that are harder to detect and dismantle;¹⁵

(b) **Corruption and capture.** Criminal networks systematically abuse legal business structures and State institutions, facilitated by professional enablers across various fields, and corruption remains central to the business model. Transnational organized criminal groups are very successful in laundering profits, using parallel global systems or clandestine transfer and investment vehicles, thus exploiting formal regulated financial systems. Terrorist groups can often benefit from transnational organized crime for financing and logistical support;¹⁶

(c) **Use of frontier technologies.** Transnational organized criminal groups are making increasingly sophisticated use of technologies, with new digital infrastructure enabling entirely new forms of crime and providing tactical advantages that law enforcement struggles to match. Criminal groups are adopting artificial intelligence, voice cloning and deepfakes at a rapid rate, and are integrating drones into their operations;¹⁷

17. Transnational organized criminal groups have been particularly adept at integrating new service-based business models and technologies. For example, such groups operate scam centres perpetrating romance, lottery, investment and other scams and extortion, with the proceeds laundered through underground cryptocurrency markets and formal banking channels.¹⁸ Multiple forms of transnational organized crime converge in such operations: trafficking in persons for forced criminality, kidnapping for ransom, cyberfraud, sexual exploitation and money-laundering, among other things. Such groups operate most prominently in South-East Asia, where victims are trafficked from Africa, Asia and the Americas to work in compounds, while cyberfraud targets extend to North America, Europe and other regions.¹⁹

18. A particularly heinous aspect of transnational organized crime is human trafficking. Trafficking for forced criminality is rising, as organized crime models use

¹⁴ See <https://press.un.org/en/2010/gashc3976.doc.htm>.

¹⁵ United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), *Beneath the Surface: Terrorist and Violent Extremist Use of the Dark Web and Cybercrime-as-a-Service for Cyber-Attacks* (2024). Available at www.unicri.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/DW_BtS.pdf.

¹⁶ UNODC, *Inflection Point*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime and the Convergence of Cyber-Enabled Fraud, Underground Banking and Technological Innovation in Southeast Asia: A Shifting Threat Landscape* (October 2024). Available at www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2024/TOC_Convergence_Report_2024.pdf.

¹⁹ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024* (United Nations publication, 2024). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2024/GLOTIP2024_BOOK.pdf.

trafficking victims for online scams and other crimes. Most detected victims of this form of trafficking are men and boys, who account for the larger share of victims of trafficking for forced labour. Overall, women and girls continue to account for the majority of detected victims – 61 per cent – worldwide, with most trafficked for sexual exploitation.²⁰

19. The number of detected child victims of human trafficking increased by a third from 2019 to 2022, including a 38 per cent increase in detected girls. Refugee, migrant and internally displaced children are especially vulnerable.²¹ Children are also targeted by online networks,²² as evidenced by the increase in online exploitation and production of child sexual abuse material.

20. Organized criminal groups exploit displacement and the lack of safe and legal pathways for migration to perpetrate transnational organized crime, notably trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced criminality, as well as aggravated forms of smuggling. Refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons – in particular unaccompanied and separated children – are targeted due to weakened protection systems and socioeconomic instability.²³

21. Drug trafficking remains core to the transnational organized crime business model and its profits, and innovation in this illicit trade – from the trafficking of precursors and pre-precursors to the exponential rise of potentially lethal synthetic drugs such as fentanyl and nitazenes, and the unprecedented industrialization of the illicit production of coca – is driving new threats and challenges. Asia has seen a rapid expansion of methamphetamine production and trafficking of precursor chemicals for synthetic drugs. The production and trafficking of Captagon remains an urgent challenge for the Levant and the Gulf.²⁴

22. In Latin America, long the region with the highest proportion of organized crime-related homicides,²⁵ fragmented organized criminal groups are using innovative techniques, mostly throughout the cocaine production chain. This has significantly enhanced profitability and scale, contributing to supply-fuelled increases in use, notably in Europe, and driving up violence and insecurity, including in countries that were previously less affected by the cocaine trade.

23. While drug trafficking remains a central activity, transnational organized criminal groups are increasingly polycriminal, with individual groups engaged in multiple activities, including human trafficking and extortion,²⁶ arms and ammunition

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² UNICEF, “Children’s involvement in organized violence: emerging trends and knowledge gaps: based on evidence from different fields and areas of expertise”, working paper (2024). Available at www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/9736/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-Child-Violence-Recruit-2024.pdf.

²³ UNHCR, IOM and Mixed Migration Centre, *On This Journey No One Cares if You Live or Die, Volume 2* (2024). Available at www.refworld.org/reference/regionalreport/iom/2024/en/148292; UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Rohingya refugees: Land and sea routes as of 31 December 2024”. Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/114965>; UNHCR, “UNHCR’s views on asylum claims from individuals fleeing violence by gangs and other organized criminal groups in Central America and Mexico”, September 2022. Available at [www.unhcr.org/us/sites/en-us/files/legacy-pdf/631f424f4.pdf#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20High%20Commissioner%20for%20Refugees%20\(UNHCR\),relevant%20to%20pursuing%20asylum%20in%20the%20United%20States](http://www.unhcr.org/us/sites/en-us/files/legacy-pdf/631f424f4.pdf#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20High%20Commissioner%20for%20Refugees%20(UNHCR),relevant%20to%20pursuing%20asylum%20in%20the%20United%20States); and UNHCR, Division of International Protection, Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Victims of Organized Gangs (2010). Available at www.refworld.org/policy/legalguidance/unhcr/2010/en/72812.

²⁴ UNODC, *World Drug Report 2025* (United Nations publication, 2025). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR_2025/WDR25_B2_Contemporary_drug_issues.pdf.

²⁵ UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2023*.

²⁶ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024*.

trafficking,²⁷ wildlife trafficking,²⁸ intellectual property crime such as counterfeiting,²⁹ illegal mining and the illicit extraction and trade of precious and critical minerals,³⁰ illegal logging,³¹ trafficking in cultural property and health-related crimes.³² This diversification enables groups to expand their reach and establish alliances with international networks. Prisons in some countries are used by transnational organized criminal groups to conduct their operations and recruit gang members.³³

24. Linkages between transnational organized crime and terrorism are noted in some regions,³⁴ for example West Africa.^{35,36,37} Criminal networks and terrorist groups are illegally exploiting natural resources, fuelling military coups and undermining governance in a highly fragile region, and are contributing to the erosion of social cohesion, including by exacerbating farmer-herder conflicts and causing the closure of schools due to insecurity.³⁸ In the Middle East, the looting and smuggling of cultural property has been exploited by terrorist groups to support their recruitment efforts and operational capacities.^{39,40}

²⁷ United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Secretary-General's report on small arms and light weapons (2022). Available at <https://documents.unoda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/UNOCT.pdf>.

²⁸ UNEP and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), *The Rise of Environmental Crime: A Growing Threat to Natural Resources Peace, Development and Security*, Christian Nellemann and other, eds. (UNEP, 2016). Available at www.unep.org/resources/report/rise-environmental-crime-growing-threat-natural-resources-peace-development-and.

²⁹ European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and European Union Intellectual Property Office, *IP Crime and Its Link to Other Serious Crimes: Focus on Poly-Criminality* (European Union Intellectual Property Office, 2020). Available at www.euipo.europa.eu/en/publications/ip-crime-and-its-link-to-other-serious-crimes-focus-on-poly-criminality.

³⁰ UNODC, *Global Analysis on Crimes that Affect the Environment: Part 2b – Minerals Crime: Illegal Gold Mining* (United Nations publication, 2025). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crimes%20on%20Environment/ECR25_P2b_Minerals_Crime.pdf.

³¹ UNODC, *Global Analysis on Crimes that Affect the Environment: Part 2a – Forest Crimes: Illegal deforestation and logging* (United Nations publication, 2025). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crimes%20on%20Environment/ECR25_P2a_Deforestation.pdf.

³² This can include the illicit production of and trade in falsified medicines, vaccines and medical equipment, illicit drug markets, trafficking in persons for organ removal, and the misuse of biological agents. These are not only public health threats but also core enablers of transnational organized crime that undermine trust in institutions and endanger lives. See UNODC and WHO, *Contaminated Medicines and Integrity of the Pharmaceutical Excipients Supply Chain* (2025); and highlights of an expert meeting on combating trafficking in human beings for the removal of organs, available at <https://cthb.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/6/1/473661.pdf>.

³³ United Nations, United Nations system common position on incarceration (2021). Available at <https://idpc.net/publications/2021/05/united-nations-system-common-position-on-incarceration>.

³⁴ Security Council resolution 2617 (2021).

³⁵ Expert briefing by UNICRI on the intersection of violent extremism and gaming held at the United Nations Secretariat in New York, 13 December 2024. Available at <https://unicri.org/news/expert-briefing-intersection-violent-extremism-and-gaming-held-united-nations-secretariat-new-york>.

³⁶ Security Council resolution 2682 (2023).

³⁷ Security Council resolution 2617 (2021).

³⁸ UNODC, Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment – Sahel 2024 series. Available at www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/Tocta_Sahel.html.

³⁹ Security Council resolution 2199 (2015).

⁴⁰ UNICRI, *Cultural Heritage Smuggling and the Nexus with Terrorism* (2024). Available at <https://unicri.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Cultural%20Heritage%20Smuggling%20and%20the%20Nexus%20with%20Terrorism.pdf>.

A. Impacts of transnational organized crime

25. Intersecting criminal ecosystems and the many diverse forms of transnational organized crime cause wide-ranging harms and may hinder humanitarian assistance. Such crime can have multiple and different impacts on different groups, men, women and children. For example, the illicit transfer of arms, often linked to organized crime, can affect men and women differently. The overwhelming majority of small arms owners are men,⁴¹ and young men perpetrate the most armed violence, with men aged between 15 and 29 years being at the highest risk of homicide globally. At the same time, the illicit transfer of arms can be a factor fuelling gender-based violence against women.⁴²

26. Transnational organized crime and its enablers restrict and obstruct attempts to safeguard the environment, sustainably develop economies and preserve cultural heritage and rights,⁴³ providing pathways for the illicit trade in endangered species, flora and fauna, as well as cultural artefacts that lie at the centre of communities and their identity.^{44,45}

27. Transnational organized crime also undermines the effectiveness and legitimacy of governance and rule of law institutions, and disrupts legitimate trade and financial systems, exacerbating poverty, inequality and corruption, as it weakens formal institutions, limiting their ability and resources to respond to ever-increasing development challenges.⁴⁶

28. Measuring the impacts of transnational organized crime remains challenging, with different metrics highlighting different harms. Trafficking in persons causes great individual harm, while falsified medicines and other forms of health-related crime pose a grave threat to public health, in particular for impoverished communities.⁴⁷ Transnational organized criminal groups harm the environment through illegal logging, illegal natural resource extraction, trafficking in protected species⁴⁸ and the dumping of banned chemicals and waste, among other things.⁴⁹ Trafficking in cultural property destroys irreplaceable heritage and may fund terrorist operations.⁵⁰ All these manifestations of transnational organized crime affect the enjoyment of a range of human rights.

29. The global scale of transnational organized crime and of illicit markets and their financial impacts are difficult to reliably estimate due to a lack of quality data and the hidden nature of such activities. Estimates of the illicit proceeds from drug trafficking vary, but the illegal trade generates hundreds of billions of dollars each year

⁴¹ See [A/HRC/49/41](#).

⁴² See [A/HRC/44/29](#).

⁴³ UNESCO, “The Fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property: for a strengthened global dialogue”, summary of the international conference held on 14 September 2021 in partnership with the European Union. Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379805>.

⁴⁴ International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime strategic programme 2016–2020. Available at <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/66/Inf/E-SC66-Inf-21.pdf>.

⁴⁵ UNODC, “Tackling crimes that affect our ocean”, fact sheet. Available at www.unodc.org/documents/Maritime_crime/UNODC_Tackling_Crimes_that_Affect_our_Ocean.pdf.

⁴⁶ See www.unodc.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-02/escap-2024-pb-sdg16-goal-profile.pdf.

⁴⁷ WHO, A study on the public health and socioeconomic impact of substandard and falsified medical products (2017). Available at <https://iris.who.int/items/c3b05ebe-f15d-455b-b727-629ef7114c70>.

⁴⁸ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species* (Vienna, United Nations publication, 2024). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2024/Wildlife2024_Final.pdf.

⁴⁹ UNODC, *World Drug Report 2024*.

⁵⁰ See [S/2020/754](#).

worldwide.⁵¹ Losses from cybercrime in the United States of America alone exceeded an estimated \$16 billion in 2024.⁵² The International Monetary Fund (IMF), examining the macroeconomic effects of crime and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean, estimates that a 10 percentage point increase in the share of “crime-related news” is associated with a 2.5 per cent contraction in industrial production three quarters later.⁵³ The cost of crime in that region has been estimated at 3.4 per cent of gross domestic product.⁵⁴ The Global Organized Crime Index, produced by a non-governmental organization, estimates that 83 per cent of the global population now lives in countries with high criminality.⁵⁵

30. Transnational organized crime is a significant factor among the root causes of refugee and migration movements. It also endangers the safety of refugees and migrants en route to, as well as in, destination countries.⁵⁶ In addition, organized criminal activity has been cited as an increasingly relevant driver of internal displacement, with the number of people displaced by crime worldwide doubling to 1.2 million between 2023 and 2024.⁵⁷

31. The response to transnational organized crime may also have a negative impact on human rights and inadvertently increase the potential for violence.⁵⁸ For example, punitive approaches to drug control, including use of the death penalty for drug-related offences, as well as securitized responses and the militarization of law enforcement, can breach human rights standards.⁵⁹ At times, punitive approaches have led to extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment and enforced disappearance.⁶⁰ Criminal legislation, such as laws on cybercrime or counter-terrorism, has been misused to limit the legitimate exercise of rights and to suppress civil society.⁶¹ State incapacity and corruption, which may characterize contexts in which organized crime is prevalent, can frustrate victims’ search for justice.⁶²

32. Transnational organized criminal groups may interfere with democratic processes, intervening in local elections, capturing local governance institutions, and murdering and intimidating politicians, justice officials, police, journalists, civil

⁵¹ UNODC, *World Drug Report 2025*.

⁵² United States Department of Justice, *Federal Bureau of Investigation Internet Crime Report 2024*, available at www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports/2024_IC3Report.pdf.

⁵³ Paul M. Bisca and others, *Violent Crime and Insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Macroeconomic Perspective*. Departmental Paper 2024 009 (Washington, D.C., IMF, 2024). Available at www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/dp/2024/english/vcilacea.pdf.

⁵⁴ Inter-American Development Bank, “High crime costs burden Latin America and the Caribbean (11 November 2024). Available at www.iadb.org/en/news/high-crime-costs-burden-latin-america-and-caribbean.

⁵⁵ Global Organized Crime Index 2023. Available at <https://ocindex.net/report/2023/0-3-contents.html>.

⁵⁶ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024*.

⁵⁷ See [A/HRC/59/46](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees-and-migrants/2024/4/10/ceh5946).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Paragraph 2 of article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights permits States parties that have not abolished the death penalty to impose the death penalty only for “the most serious crimes”, which the Human Rights Committee has consistently interpreted as crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing (see [CCPR/C/GC/36](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees-and-migrants/2024/4/10/ceh5946), para. 35).

⁶⁰ [A/HRC/54/53](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees-and-migrants/2024/4/10/ceh5946), paras. 17–22.

⁶¹ See, for example, “Findings of the investigations conducted by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan into violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and related crimes, committed in the Sudan in the context of the conflict that erupted in mid-April 2023”, available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4091792?v=pdf>. See also OHCHR, “Tunisia: Türk says rulings in ‘conspiracy’ case are a setback for justice and the rule of law” (24 April 2025). Available at www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/04/tunisia-turk-says-rulings-conspiracy-case-are-setback-justice-and-rule-law.

⁶² [A/HRC/59/46](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees-and-migrants/2024/4/10/ceh5946).

society representatives and other community members.^{63,64} Such groups can also operate from within political and judicial institutions, instrumentalizing the State apparatus for the benefit of criminal structures and to ensure impunity for illegal acts. Transnational organized criminal groups, including some gangs, may engage as conflict actors, and the lines between criminal groups, terrorist groups and other non-State armed actors may become increasingly blurred.⁶⁵

33. Transnational organized crime represents a significant barrier to progress on global public goods, compromising and diverting the public financing capacities of States⁶⁶ and investments in health,⁶⁷ education, infrastructure and services.⁶⁸ Illicit financial flows from transnational organized criminal activities drain essential resources needed for sustainable development, thus hindering domestic resource mobilization efforts. Illicit markets infiltrate legitimate markets, corrupt State officials, fund non-State and terrorist activities, violate embargoes and sanctions regimes, and prolong armed conflict and instability.^{69,70} The funding of terrorist activities through the proceeds of transnational organized crime creates a vicious cycle in which criminal enterprises benefit from the instability generated by terrorism, while terrorist groups gain the resources needed to sustain and expand their operations.

B. Root causes and structural drivers

34. The ability of transnational organized crime to take root is interconnected with the global challenges of poverty, inequality and social exclusion; lack of education and job opportunities; insufficient access to services; weak capacity in State institutions; limited territorial presence of the State and its protection systems; corruption and instability; accountability gaps; and a lack of access to justice for victims of crimes.⁷¹ Furthermore, transnational organized crime contributes to and exacerbates these same problems by undermining institutional legitimacy and

⁶³ Catharina Nickel and Summer Walker, “Transnational organized crime and peacekeeping: strengthening mission approaches for greater impact” (United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, 2025). Available at <https://unu.edu/publication/transnational-organized-crime-and-peacekeeping-strengthening-mission-approaches-greater>.

⁶⁴ OHCHR, United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (31 January 2023). Available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/journalists/2023-01-31/un-plan-on-safety-journalists_en.pdf.

⁶⁵ See S/2020/754.

⁶⁶ UNCTAD, *Economic Development in Africa Report 2020: Tackling Illicit Financial Flows for Sustainable Development in Africa* (United Nations publication, 2020). Available at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/aldcafrica2020_en.pdf.

⁶⁷ WHO, A study on the public health and socioeconomic impact of substandard and falsified medical products.

⁶⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Tracking illicit financial flows for effective action” (2025). Available at https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Brief%20Series%20-%20UNCTAD_IFFs.pdf.

⁶⁹ UNICRI, *Organized Crime and the Legal Economy: The Italian Case* (United Nations publication, 2016). Available at https://unicri.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/UNICRI_Organized_Crime_and_Legal_Economy_report.pdf.

⁷⁰ United Nations, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, “Trends tracker: evolving trends in the financing of foreign terrorist fighters’ activity: 2014–2024”. Available at www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/cted_trends_tracker_evolution_trends_in_the_financing_of_foreign_terrorist_fighters_activity_2014_-_2024.pdf.

⁷¹ UNDP, *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Pathways to Recruitment and Disengagement* (United Nations publication, February 2023). Available at www.undp.org/publications/journey-extremism-africa-pathways-recruitment-and-disengagement.

efficacy, depleting public resources, harming livelihoods and lives, and eroding trust in State institutions that are often already weak.⁷²

35. Weak governance and situations in which human rights are not upheld increase vulnerability to transnational organized crime. Concentrated criminal control of a territory – whether in a conflict situation or border zone or area where law enforcement and the State have limited access and trust – can have devastating effects on the local population.⁷³ Communities can become dependent on illicit markets for subsistence, and organized criminal groups may step in to provide governance and services that States traditionally provide, contributing to complex structural challenges that cannot be addressed solely through measures to disrupt specific criminal actors.⁷⁴

36. Supply and demand dynamics connect the global North and global South and source, transit and destination countries, underscoring the need for cooperation and shared responsibility. Demand for drugs such as cocaine, for example, is centred in wealthier countries and segments of society, while cultivation and production entrap the impoverished. Persistent demand in affluent consumer markets⁷⁵ for wildlife, timber and marine resources is also contributing to transnational organized crime related to environmentally sensitive commodities. For example, seizures of red sandalwood, used in high-end furniture and carvings, rose by 128 per cent from 2022 to 2023, with demand concentrated in Asia.⁷⁶ Furthermore, transnational organized criminal groups are adjusting operations to exploit market opportunities while maximizing profits and minimizing risk. For example, as gold prices have skyrocketed, such groups have become highly embedded in the sector, from engaging in illegal mining to exploiting regulation gaps to introducing illicitly sourced gold into the licit supply.⁷⁷

C. Response gaps

37. The rapid evolution and spread of transnational organized crime in recent years are making it increasingly difficult for government and law enforcement responses to keep pace. In addition to capacity constraints, State responses to such crime in many countries are fragmented and weakened by a lack of internal coordination, with knock-on effects on a country's ability to effectively engage in international cooperation. Further, law enforcement and security agencies often lack the specialized skills and inter-agency coordination mechanisms needed to investigate and prosecute cases involving transnational organized crime and other crimes such as terrorism. In response to enforcement actions, transnational organized criminal groups shift operations to other commodities, crime forms or locations, and

⁷² Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, *The Global Illicit Economy: Trajectories of Transnational Organized Crime* (March 2021), available at www.unodc.org/cld/uploads/res/bibliography/2021/the_global_illicit_economy_-_trajectories_of_transnational_organized_crime_html/The-Global-Illicit-Economy-GITOC-Low.pdf.

⁷³ Paul M. Bisca and others, *Violent Crime and Insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

⁷⁴ UNODC, *Governing Safer Cities: Strategies for a Globalised World* (United Nations publication, December 2016). Available at www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/SaferCities.pdf.

⁷⁵ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report 2024*.

⁷⁶ World Customs Organization, *Illicit Trade Report 2023*, p. 122. Available at www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2024/june/wco-releases-illicit-trade-report-2023.aspx.

⁷⁷ UNODC, *Global Analysis on Crimes that Affect the Environment: Part 2b*.

“jurisdiction shopping” and the “balloon effect”⁷⁸ further underscore the need for coordinated and sustained cross-border responses.

38. Lack of quality and comparable data is a continuing challenge, and the available relevant data are often siloed, hindering a more comprehensive understanding of transnational organized crime and its impacts, including the interplay between local, national, regional, subregional and global dynamics, and the interaction between different criminal markets and ecosystems.

39. The use of surveillance technologies, as well as other uses of artificial intelligence, in compliance with international law and while safeguarding human rights, could potentially be harnessed to help prevent and investigate transnational organized crime, but official capacities are lagging behind those of criminal groups. Capacity shortfalls also exist with regard to the know-how to disrupt criminal financing, with financial institutions falling short when it comes to compliance with regulations concerning anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism, and the use of cryptocurrencies further complicating the investigation of financial crimes.

40. The need to target the enablers of transnational organized crime and limit its profitability further highlight the importance of interventions that address not just the global South but also the countries of the global North, which function as key nodes in the international financial system and may be used by criminal groups to operate in and channel proceeds of criminal operations through their jurisdictions.

41. Within the United Nations system, there is a high level of awareness regarding transnational organized crime, and entities are engaged in multiple relevant activities across their mandate areas. Nonetheless, gaps remain in both understanding the impact of such crime across the work of the United Nations system and how to effectively address it, taking into consideration the different mandates, priorities, capacities and resources of each United Nations system entity concerned with transnational organized crime. Given the different regional manifestations of organized crime, more work is also needed to connect the efforts of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams and the Development Coordination Office to confront the cross-border challenges of transnational organized crime.

42. In a mapping of United Nations system responses to transnational organized crime, conducted in the first quarter of 2025 with the participation of 25 entities, more than half considered such crime to be relevant to their mandates, while the majority indicated that it had an impact on the implementation of agency mandates across the United Nations system. The mapping found that there existed a well-established level of inter-agency cooperation on a wide range of issues related to transnational organized crime, with many entities collaborating across the United Nations system at the global, regional and national levels. The entities also indicated a high level of coordination with governments, regional bodies, civil society and the private sector, as well as with other institutions, including those in academia, think tanks and religious communities.

43. Despite existing collaboration efforts, the mapping and common approach process has highlighted that transnational organized crime is still not sufficiently recognized as an overarching issue for the United Nations system, which may have had the unintended effect of limiting coordinated planning, which in turn increases

⁷⁸ When the disruption of organized crime in one locality creates displacement, aggravating the situation in other areas. See UNODC, *Organized Crime Strategy Toolkit for Developing High-Impact Strategies* (United Nations, September 2021). Available at www.unodc.org/cld/uploads/pdf/Strategies/OC_Strategy_Toolkit_Ebook.pdf

the risk of duplication of effort, siloed programming, misalignment of scarce resources and missed opportunities.

44. Initiatives may lack sustainability due to limited funding, personnel turnover and weak institutional memory, coupled with differing priorities and operational modalities between the different entities. Furthermore, the mapping found that existing platforms, mechanisms and legal frameworks were also underutilized and information and data exchange between entities was limited. According to the entities surveyed, existing coordination mechanisms⁷⁹ were not used to their full potential, as they were often resource- and time-intensive. Moreover, while relevant mechanisms addressing the rule of law, trafficking in persons, security sector reform and other related challenges could support responses to transnational organized crime, they were not in themselves designed to fully tackle transnational organized crime.

45. Greater coordination and innovation in support of State prevention and response strategies to transnational organized crime are needed. There exists an agreed international legal framework underpinning Member State responses and coordination. The primary global instrument specifically addressing transnational organized crime is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto on trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants and the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms,⁸⁰ which are further supported by the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime provides a key forum for Member States to strengthen international cooperation against such crime. The new United Nations Convention against Cybercrime; Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes,⁸¹ with full implementation of the Convention's human rights safeguards, has the potential to reinforce the fight against transnational organized crime, including by facilitating the collection, sharing and use of digital evidence. Moreover, the international legal framework, including international human rights law and environmental law, provides instruments to identify State responsibilities to respect rights in the context of transnational organized crime.

46. Despite this established framework, State capacities to prevent and tackle transnational organized crime, along with the ability to engage in international cooperation, including mutual legal assistance, vary considerably between countries. Enhanced, coordinated support from United Nations system entities – ranging from strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks and building capacity in key institutions, to promoting cross-border cooperation and facilitating asset recovery, as well as addressing the terrorism-transnational organized crime nexus – is urgently needed.

⁷⁹ See https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/HLCP50-TOC_list_of_coordination_mechanisms.pdf.

⁸⁰ The Convention, which entered into force in 2003, has 194 parties, while its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children has 185 parties, its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air has 154 signatories and its Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition has 126 parties.

⁸¹ Opened for signature in Hanoi in October 2025. See www.unodc.org/unodc/en/cybercrime/convention/home.html.

V. Enhanced United Nations system coordination: recommendations

47. Effective responses to transnational organized crime must be evidence-based, balanced and comprehensive, focusing on prevention, legislation and regulation, criminal justice and other measures that anticipate and keep pace with criminal innovation and address the real needs of those affected by such crime. A coherent United Nations policy approach to transnational organized crime is also human rights-based, people-centred and victim-focused, and acknowledges the need to address structural drivers and build resilience.

48. Necessary measures include promoting macroeconomic stability, inclusive growth and education and job opportunities for young people, as well as strengthening the rule of law and addressing impacts on all human rights and harms to institutions, economies and services, in areas ranging from education and healthcare to food. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies must take transnational organized crime, and potentially transnational organized criminal groups, into account, in light of the role they may play in situations of armed conflict.

49. United Nations assistance, programming and other measures must complement international standards, including human rights standards, and encourage State interventions that are aligned to international law. Balanced measures should not wrongfully criminalize vulnerable people nor should they exacerbate conditions which may serve to drive people towards transnational organized crime.

50. As appropriate, analysis should take into consideration how transnational organized crime affects men, women and children, often in different ways, as well as people in vulnerable situations; and assistance, programmes and other measures should be aligned accordingly. Engagement with civil society and, most of all, those affected by transnational organized crime must be a cornerstone of United Nations programming and action, with due attention paid to the protection of victims of such crime, including trafficking victims and in particular women and girls, and to the responsibility of perpetrators. A human rights-based, people-centred, victims-focused and protective approach to justice, including comprehensive corrections system approaches encompassing prevention and rehabilitation, should be emphasized.

51. While transnational organized crime is by its very nature transnational, organized criminal groups themselves and their operations are highly embedded in social structures and local contexts. Effective and sustainable solutions must be ground-up, localized and community-based, addressing the needs of affected people and victims, as well as drawing upon the strengths and mandates of the whole of the United Nations system. This is particularly critical for interventions promoting sustainable livelihoods and alternative development. A focus on coordinated and tailored prevention efforts to address transnational organized crime at the local level, while also targeting organized crime “hotspots” such as prisons or urban areas, could be effective and cost-effective. Identifying and amplifying success stories and good practices from such interventions could provide a valuable resource and support effective South-South cooperation.

52. The strengths of the United Nations system in addressing transnational organized crime highlighted in the mapping and during Committee discussions and field dialogues include its extensive field presence, institutional expertise, strong convening and coordination power and, most importantly, its strong relationship with Member States and host Governments. In this context, the United Nations system can do more to deploy its full potential and provide more coherent and coordinated policy, programmatic and technical support to Member States to tackle the increasingly

complex problem of transnational organized crime, working with regional intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to enhance understanding of trends and impacts related to such crime and help to address response gaps and fragmentation. To deliver on this potential, the following actions for United Nations system coordination are recommended:

(a) The United Nations must speak and act as one against transnational organized crime, building a strong narrative that responds to the realities of countries and regions and helps to connect transnational organized crime interventions, from prevention to criminal justice responses to addressing harms and impacts, in a coherent way. Greater coordination between United Nations system entities and the resident coordinator system for cross-border initiatives is essential, especially given the transnational nature of organized crime. The United Nations can serve as facilitator on a national level, to help articulate needs and create spaces for action and coordination with key institutions, including by involving non-traditional actors, such as the private sector, and strengthen international cooperation on the regional and global levels;

(b) Collection, generation and sharing of high-quality, timely data and evidence-based analysis across entities – including root cause analysis and collections of good practices – must be stepped up to fully leverage each mandate’s unique strengths and expertise. This is critical not only for helping to inform strategic Member State responses, but also for enabling early identification of high-risk areas, evolving threats, emerging trends and potential hotspots;

(c) Common messaging, joint advocacy and joint resource mobilization should be pursued, in support of United Nations system capacities to jointly and effectively address transnational organized crime through capacity-building, institutional development and targeted training. Joint advocacy can also serve to influence the narrative on transnational organized crime, including to promote policies rooted in human rights and the rule of law and promote whole-of-society and inclusive approaches that advocate for equal representation of women, men, young people and all communities, and the participation of all stakeholders, including civil society, in solutions to counter such crime.

53. With respect to implementation of the common approach at the regional and country levels, identified areas of focus include undertaking joint risk assessments and joint programming as relevant, potentially addressing gaps in data, developing foresight capacities and leveraging new technologies to combat transnational organized crime. It was further emphasized that, at the regional and country levels, it is important to integrate law enforcement and security measures, rooted in human rights, with other interventions, including community dialogues and mobilization, youth engagement and trust-building between civil society and security actors. Such efforts strengthen local resilience and can reduce the appeal and influence of transnational organized crime.

A. The path forward

54. The following proposed areas of joint action, with expected deliverables, identify lead entities and timelines, respond to the recommendations outlined above and are aimed at developing solutions, on the global, regional and national levels, to equip the United Nations system:

(a) To improve the understanding of and response to the evolving nature of transnational organized crime – its adaptability and use of factors such as corruption and illicit finance, as well as emerging technologies, among other things – and the

convergence of transnational organized criminal activities and criminal ecosystems, including the terrorism-transnational organized crime nexus, through:

- (i) Enhanced data collection and sharing within the United Nations system and forward-looking analysis;
- (ii) Integrated support, coordinated across United Nations entities, for resident coordinators and country teams, to address fragmented responses on the national level, support the development of national, subregional and regional strategies and strengthen cross-border coordination;
- (b) To promote joint resource mobilization, develop programming and share expertise to strengthen transnational organized crime-related support to Member States, including to address activities related to such crime in the global North and the global South and the economic and financial crime, illicit financial flows and corruption underpinning transnational organized crime;
- (c) To foster a global and shared narrative on transnational organized crime that takes into account regional and national specificities and advocates for integrated solutions based on human rights and the rule of law.

55. Emerging technologies and their application in preventing and addressing transnational organized crime will be taken into account across initiatives to further support effective implementation and future-proof responses.

B. Joint actions for implementation

Improve the understanding of and response to the evolving nature of transnational organized crime

Joint action 1: strengthening exchange of information, analysis and opportunities regarding the use of technology and innovation for preventing and addressing transnational organized crime, and use of early warning, foresight and forecasting tools to more effectively anticipate, prepare and respond to the changing nature of such crime

Proposed deliverable:	Feasibility assessment of a joint, internal transnational organized crime-related data platform (global, regional and national) to support United Nations system-wide coherence, coordination and information-sharing, with the aim of pooling better data to inform the United Nations system, enable the forecasting of potential hotspots geographically and thematically, provide insights, support decision-making and strengthen prevention. The assessment will draw upon lessons from the United Nations system.
Lead entity:	UNODC
Contributing entities:	IOM, Office of Counter-Terrorism, OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, World Intellectual Property Organization and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)
Timeline:	2026

Joint action 2: pilot in Latin America and the Caribbean to explore tailored, regional implementation of the global common approach

Proposed deliverable(s):	Regional road map for implementation with joint risk analysis, a financing plan and advocacy anticipated.
Lead entities:	UNODC, Development Coordination Office in Latin America and the Caribbean and UNDP

Contributing entity: OHCHR

Timeline: 2026

Develop programming and sharing of expertise to strengthen transnational organized crime-related support to Member States

Joint action 3: joint action to address financial crime and illicit financial flows

Proposed deliverable: Joint initiative to strengthen capacity to improve the confiscation of proceeds of crime through international cooperation, financial investigations and risk-based supervision of banks and non-banks and designated non-bank businesses and professions, drawing on the capacities of UNODC regional anti-corruption and economic crime hubs for delivery.

Lead entities: UNODC and IMF

Contributing entities: UNCTAD and UNDP

Timeline: 2026

Joint action 4: database of legislation relevant to transnational organized crime.

Proposed deliverable: Supplementing the existing UNODC knowledge management portal (Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC)) that facilitates the dissemination of information regarding the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,^a a joint initiative to identify, collect and analyse other legislation relevant to transnational organized crime, to be displayed and made available in an open-access database, featured as a subset of the FAOLEX database.^b This activity would build upon an existing partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNODC on conceptualizing a FAOLEX subset dedicated to illegal fishing as a crime, expanding this idea to include transnational organized crime that affects natural resources and wildlife.

Lead entity: FAO

Contributing entities: UNEP and UNODC

Timeline: 2026–2027

Joint action 5: data mapping and remedial measures on environmental crime, addressing transnational organized crime concerns relating to criminal activities that affect the environment

First phase

Proposed deliverable:^c A mapping/tangible data collection of the extent to which transnational organized crime contributes to environmental degradation and affects the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a first step, a concept will be developed to determine the scope and geographical coverage (selected regions, countries or global).

Lead entities: UNEP, UNODC and UNDP

Contributing entities: FAO, with United Nations country teams and interested entities

Timeline: 2026–2027

Second phase

Proposed deliverable:^c Upon conclusion of the mapping process, a study may follow up on how remedial and restoration measures for the environment and the communities may be incorporated into criminal justice measures to address transnational organized crime, such as those related to crimes that affect the environment.

Lead entity: UNEP

Contributing entity: FAO

Timeline: 2027–2028

Foster a global and shared narrative on transnational organized crime

Joint action 6: joint messaging for use by United Nations system principals and resident coordinators

Proposed deliverables: Joint messaging and campaign assets on transnational organized crime and associated financial crime for use on the International Day for the Prevention of and Fight against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime (15 November)

Lead entity: UNODC

Contributing entities: CITES, IOM, Office of Counter-Terrorism, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO

Timeline: October–November 2025

^a www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html.

^b FAOLEX is a comprehensive and up-to-date legislative and policy database and online repository of national laws, regulations and policies on food, agriculture and natural resources management. Available at www.fao.org/faolex.

^c Subject to availability of resources and priorities.

56. The common approach is intended to be a dynamic framework, capable of responding to the evolving nature of transnational organized crime and new challenges as they develop. In order to support implementation of the agreed actions, as well as future joint actions, under the common approach, it is proposed to create a standing inter-agency coordination mechanism outside of the High-level Committee on Programmes, led by UNODC with a rotating co-chair. Terms of reference are to be developed and agreed with participating entities.