

Threats to international peace and security
Concept paper in preparation of the briefing by the Executive Director of UNODC

The Security Council and Transnational Threats

The Security Council has several times noted with concern the consequences of transnational threats, such as organized crime and drug trafficking, on international peace and security.

It repeatedly noted the role played by drug trafficking and organized crime in the emergence of conflicts in places such as Afghanistan (Res. 1817/2008 and 1890/2009), Haiti (Res. 1892/2009) and Guinea Bissau (PRST of 15 October 2008 and 5 November 2009).

It also considered the issue on a more general point of view in Res. 1373/2001 on Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (the Council “[noted] with concern the close connection between international terrorism and transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, money-laundering, illegal arms-trafficking, and illegal movement of nuclear, chemical, biological and other potentially deadly material”) and in PRST/2009/32 on Peace and Security in Africa (“the Council notes with concern the serious threats posed in some cases by drug trafficking and related transnational organized crime to international security in different regions of the world, including in Africa”).

A threat to security

Transnational threats create roots for the development of regional and global tensions. Drug trafficking and related transnational organized crime encourage money laundering and makes possible the financing of non-governmental armed groups. Organized crime networks threaten effective state control on borders and territories. They undermine the authority of states, spread corruption and weaken economic development. Therefore, they pave the way for radicalisation processes that can lead to violent extremism and terrorism. Insurgents and criminals develop close ties to profit from this instability and in some cases create the conditions for such instability.

As a matter of fact, transnational threats are a destabilizing factor in every crisis where the United Nations operates. They take advantage of the weakness of states in conflict situations and make the return to peace and economic development a more protracted and more difficult process for those states.

A growing challenge

The international community adopted several conventions in order to counter transnational threats in a comprehensive approach:

- the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961,
- the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971,
- the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988,
- the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000,
- the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 2003.

However, in the last decades, advances in technology, open borders and open markets created greater cross-border opportunities for criminal groups. As a result, organized crime has diversified, gone global, and has reached macro-economic proportions. It developed even closer links with drug trafficking, corruption and terrorism. It poses a greater threat to national and global security than when the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted. No part of the world is immune. Particularly vulnerable are post-conflict regions, areas where the rule of law is weak and countries that suffer from under-development.

Briefing by the Executive Director of UNODC

The purpose of the meeting proposed by France on 24 February 2010 is to bring greater attention to the consequences of transnational threats on regional and international security, mobilize political will to act and give added support to making more effective use of United Nations instruments and tools designed to prevent and control crime.

The discussion will be open by a briefing of Mr Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Possible themes of discussion may include the following:

- legal basis: current challenges ten years after the adoption of the United Nations convention on transnational organized crime;
 - multilateral cooperation: strategy to reduce vulnerability to drugs and crime, when threats come from non-state and trans-national actors which are not accountable to inter-governmental bodies nor respectful of sovereign borders;
 - information: threat assessments, intelligence-sharing, mutual legal assistance and strategic analysis;
 - role of the United Nations: mainstreaming of the issue of crime prevention as a factor in conflict prevention strategies, conflict analysis, integrated missions' assessment and planning;
 - role of the Security Council: opportunity, as appropriate, for regular briefings by UNODC on transnational threats, in particular transnational organized crime and drug trafficking, on a twice a year basis./.
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