

Briefing by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime

Expected Council Action

The Council is expecting a briefing on 24 February under the agenda item “Threats to International Peace and Security” from the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa. This will be followed by a Council debate.

France, the Council president in February, has circulated a draft presidential statement.

Background

Transnational threats, specifically, drug trafficking and organised crime, and their closely associated vices like money laundering and bankrolling armed non-state actors, have become key destabilising factors in many regions. They undermine effective state control within territories, circumvent borders and stimulate non-governmental armed groups.

A number of international agreements have been drawn up under UN auspices to stem these transnational threats. These include:

- the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961;
- the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971;
- the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988;
- the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime of 2000; and
- the UN Convention against Corruption of 2003.

The Security Council has on a number of occasions recognised the significance of such transnational threats for international peace and security, particularly the role played by drug trafficking and organised crime in conflicts, including the specific cases of Afghanistan (S/RES/1817 and S/RES/1890), Guinea-Bissau (S/PRST/2009/29) and Haiti (S/RES/1892), and thematically regarding the continent of Africa (S/PRST/2009/32) and in the context of the issue of terrorism (S/RES/1373).

Key Recent Developments

France has circulated a concept paper ahead of the 24 February briefing by the Executive Director of UNODC in which it indicates that the briefing will draw wider attention to the contemporary implications of transnational threats to regional and international security with a view to mobilising political will to improve UN capacity to prevent and control such threats.

The concept paper suggests five possible areas of discussion, including examining:

- the legal aspects of the issue, especially current challenges ten years following the adoption of the UN convention against transnational Organised crime;
- multilateral cooperation, including ways to reduce vulnerability to drugs and crime when threats arise from non-state and transnational actors which are not accountable to intergovernmental bodies nor respectful of sovereign borders;
- information sharing, including threat assessments, intelligence-sharing, mutual legal assistance and strategic analysis;
- the role of the UN in mainstreaming the issue of crime prevention as a crucial element in conflict prevention strategies, conflict analyses, integrated missions' assessment and planning and peacekeeping support; and
- the role of the Council, including considering the opportunity for regular briefings by UNODC on the transnational threats, in particular transnational organised crime and drug trafficking.

On 17 February France circulated a draft presidential statement to Council members, which reportedly seeks to highlight the challenges posed by transnational threats to peace and security.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Council is whether it is ready to again address the overall phenomenon of transnational organised crime as a threat to global peace and security.

Another key issue in this context will be to determine how best the Council can contribute to addressing the issue of transnational criminal threats to global peace and security and how the Council can add value in the fight against transnational threats. A related question is whether the Council should continue to discuss the issue of transnational threats to regional and international security in thematic settings or strive to take up the issue in the context of country-specific situations.

A related issue is the evolving nature of such threats resulting from advances in technology, increasingly open borders and open markets that create growing cross-border opportunities for criminal groups.

There is also the question of whether the Council can do more in this context to develop partnerships with regional organisations in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

Options

The most likely option is for the Council to adopt a presidential statement.

Another option for the Council would be a commitment to regularly include analysis of transnational crime issues when renewing existing mandates and setting up new ones and requesting that they are routinely covered in the relevant reports by the Secretary-General.

A further option would be to request the Peacebuilding Commission, where appropriate, to actively pursue the issue of legitimate economic alternatives to transnational crime and drug trafficking, and encourage the local actors to highlight the need for the citizenry to desist from participating in these negative parallel economies.

Council Dynamics

In recent months, the Council has shown considerable interest in the impact of transnational crime on international and regional peace and security. On 5 November 2009, during the Austrian presidency, the Council invited the head of UNODC to brief on the problem of illicit drug

trafficking in Guinea-Bissau and the West African subregion (which has emerged as a key transit point for illicit drugs, in particular cocaine from Latin American countries to Europe).

During the 8 December 2009 thematic debate on the topic “Peace and Security in Africa: Drug Trafficking as a Threat to International Security”, organised by Burkina Faso, Council members stressed the importance of strengthening transnational cooperation to stem the global trafficking problem in view of the serious threats posed by drug trafficking and related transnational crime to international security in different regions of the world, including Africa. There was also, at that time, a general consensus on the need for a follow-up to these discussions.

Council members seem generally sympathetic to the Council articulating a collective vision of the significance of these “non-political” transnational threats to global security. It was not certain at press time how ambitious such a Council statement will be. While the expected adoption of the presidential statement following the meeting is not the norm for Council meetings held in the format of “briefings,” the initiative seems to have garnered sufficient momentum for consensus on a statement.

UN Documents

Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1892 (13 October 2009) noted the role played by drug trafficking and organised crime in the emergence of conflicts in Haiti.
- S/RES/1890 (8 October 2009) noted the role played by drug trafficking and organised crime in the emergence of conflicts in Afghanistan.
- S/RES/1876 (26 June 2009) extended the mandate of UNOGBIS and stressed the need to build capacity to combat organised crime and drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau.
- S/RES/1829 (4 August 2008) established UNIPSIL and mandated it to promote and monitor efforts to combat transnational organised crime and drug trafficking.
- S/RES/1817 (11 June 2008) focused on the connection between Afghan drug production and security, terrorism and organised crime.
- S/RES/1373 (28 September 2001) was on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts and 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...”*

Selected Council Presidential Statements

- S/PRST/2009/32 (8 December 2009) recognised the threat to international security posed by drug trafficking and organised transnational crime.
- S/PRST/2009/29 (5 November 2009) highlighted drug related issues in Guinea-Bissau and steps to be taken by the government and international community to counter these.
- S/PRST/2008/37 (15 October 2008) welcomed the initiative of ECOWAS to convene a regional conference on combating drug trafficking.
- S/PRST/2007/38 (24 October 2007) expressed deep concern about the threat posed by drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau.
- S/PRST/2003/7 (18 June 2003) focused on the connection between Afghan drug production and security, terrorism, and organized crime.

Other

- Concept paper from France for the briefing by the Executive Director of the UNODC (17 February 2010)
- S/PV.6233 & Resumption 1 (8 December 2009) was the verbatim record of the Council’s thematic debate on “Peace and Security in Africa: Drug Trafficking as a

Threat to International Security”.

- S/PV.6212 and S/PV.6213 contained the verbatim records of the briefing by the head of UNODC to brief on the problem of illicit drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau and the West African sub-region.
- UN Convention against Corruption of 2003
- A/RES/55/25 (8 January 2001) was the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.
- UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988
- Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971
- Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961

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