



# SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



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## DRUG TRAFFICKING AS A THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

### Expected Council Action

The Council is set to hold an open debate on 8 December on the topic of drug trafficking as a threat to international security. The debate is expected to be presided over by the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso, Bédouma Alain Yoda. The presence of other ministerial level speakers is possible. The Secretary-General has indicated he will participate and Antonio Maria Costa, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, is also expected to be invited to brief the Council.

Burkina Faso, the Council president in December, has circulated a draft presidential statement proposed as an outcome from the debate.

### Historical Background

The 8 December debate will be the first thematic debate in the Council specifically focusing on drug trafficking as a global security threat. However, concerns about the impact of drugs on various country-specific security situations have arisen on several occasions in Council debates and decisions in the past. The impact of drug trafficking and/or use has come up in more than 200 debates and drugs have been mentioned in 22 resolutions and 18 presidential statements. Yet most of these instances were simply brief references to this problem and were overshadowed by other more direct security issues facing the Council.

In the late 1980s, drug trafficking was referred to in discussions on Panama in several Council debates. In the 1990s, drug trafficking was discussed in the context of the war in the former Yugoslavia and the situation in Haiti.

From around 1996, the situation in Afghanistan accounted for the bulk of the Council's drug-related issues. It was mentioned in more than ten resolutions and a similar number of presidential statements bringing up the issue. One presidential statement (S/PRST/2003/7) and resolution 1817 specifically focused on the connection between Afghan drug production and security, terrorism and organised crime. (For more details on the process leading up to the adoption of resolution 1817 please refer to our 9 June 2008 *Update Report on Afghanistan*.) In these decisions, the Council recognised the need for the international community to come up with an integrated and balanced approach and to treat addressing the drug-related problems as a shared responsibility.

Over the last two years, the Council has shown increasing concern about the advance of international organised crime and drug trafficking in some fragile states in West Africa which had been used as safe havens and transit points (mainly on the way to Europe) for drugs produced in other parts of the world, Latin America in particular.

In October 2007, in a presidential statement the Council expressed deep concern about drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau, recognised the importance of undertaking efforts to reverse the threat posed to peace consolidation in the country by organised crime and drug trafficking, and welcomed the initiative of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to hold a conference aimed at coming up with

regional solutions to the problem. Once the date for the conference was set a year later, the Council welcomed the event with another presidential statement.

In 2008, when setting up the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone through resolution 1829, the Council mandated it to promote and monitor “efforts to counter transnational organized crime and drug trafficking.”

In June 2009, while extending the mandate of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau through the end of the year in resolution 1876, it noted the growing prominence of organised crime and drug trafficking in the country, stressed the need to strengthen the capacity of the government to counter these phenomena and reaffirmed the need to combat impunity for illicit drug trafficking. In the same resolution the Council asked the Secretary-General to establish, as of 1 January 2010, the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau whose mandate would include assisting the national authorities in combating drug trafficking and organised crime. In November, in a presidential statement that welcomed the presidential elections and the inauguration of the new leader in Guinea-Bissau, it highlighted a number of drug related issues and steps that needed to be taken both by the country’s authorities and by the international community to counter those problems.

In September, in a resolution extending the mandate of the UN Mission in Liberia, the Council noted with concern “the threats to subregional stability, including to Liberia” by drug trafficking and organised crime.

Even though it has only been in the last few years that the Council as a whole focused attention on drug trafficking problems affecting Africa, individual Council members have been warning of the problem over a much longer period, in particular in various ministerial-level Council debates on Africa held in the late 1990s. There have also been mentions of the drug problem by some delegates in discussions of specific situations in Africa on the agenda, including Somalia, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Concern about the impact of drugs on wider security issues has also come up sporadically in some other situation-specific debates, including on Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Myanmar, Lebanon and Iraq.

In addition, the problem has been mentioned in some thematic debates, most notably on small arms, security sector reform, terrorism, and children and armed conflict.

### **Key Issues**

A key emerging issue is the destabilisation of fragile or weak states as a result of corruption and use of force by the criminal drug industry. This has a highly destabilising impact on already fragile nations, threatens neighbours and poses risks of relapse into conflict and of a spread of instability beyond the former conflict areas.

Another new issue is the fact that several countries who up until recently were not affected by drug addiction as a social problem, now need to add narcotic drugs and their impact on public health to the multiple problems they need to cope with while emerging from conflict.

An ongoing issue for the Council is the use of drug money in some areas to finance ongoing conflict as well as international terrorism.

A key issue for the Council is whether to now formally recognise the problem of drug trafficking as a global international security threat. A related issue is to identify the unique role the Council can play given that there is already a worldwide fight against drug trafficking. In this context, an issue for the Council will be how to acknowledge the work of the General Assembly and other UN bodies and the coordinating role of the Secretariat dedicated body, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, while at the same time identifying a way in which the Council itself can add value by addressing the international security aspects of the problem.

A related issue for the Council is to promote strategic and coordinated approaches to address the issue in areas of production, transit and consumption which may each be situated on a different continent.

## Options

The most likely option is for the Council to adopt a presidential statement that could address some of the following matters:

- recognising drug trafficking and related transnational organised crime activities as a serious threat to international peace and security;
- requesting the Secretary-General to include drug trafficking as a factor when conducting conflict analysis, undertaking mission assessments, elaborating conflict prevention strategies and planning peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding support;
- recognising the importance of the actions undertaken by the General Assembly, the UN Economic and Social Council, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant UN organs and agencies and encouraging them to take further actions in this regard;
- stressing the need to reinforce the coordination of UN actions in order to enhance the effectiveness of international efforts in the fight against drug trafficking; and
- stressing the importance of strengthening transregional and international cooperation to counter the world drug problem and criminal activities, and the need for support of relevant national, subregional and regional organisations and mechanisms.

A further option for the Council would be a commitment to regularly include analysis of drug trafficking 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.

Another option would be to ask the Peacebuilding Commission to, where appropriate, actively pursue the issue of economic alternatives to drug cultivation to discourage local population's participation in the drug economy.

## Council Dynamics

Council members appear to be in agreement that it is timely for them to formally address the problem of drug trafficking as an international security threat as a thematic issue. Initially, Burkina Faso proposed having a debate focused on the problem in West Africa. However, several members, in particular from Asia and Latin America, suggested that the scope should be broader and that the debate should address drug trafficking as a global problem. Thus, even though the agenda item under which the debate is scheduled is Peace and Security in Africa, participants are expected to address the issue more broadly and the presidential statement is likely to also reach beyond Africa.

## UN Documents

### Selected Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1885 (15 September 2009) extended UNMIL's mandate and noted with concern threats to Liberian and subregional security posed by drug trafficking and organised crime.
- 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.

### Selected Presidential Statements

- 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 (17 June 2003) focused on the connection between Afghan drug production and security, terrorism, and organized crime.

### Selected General Assembly Resolutions

- A/RES/S-20/2 (10 June 1998) was the General Assembly resolution adopted during a special session on drugs.

## Useful Additional Resources

- UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 (as amended by the Protocol of 25 March 1972)
- UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988 (the 1988 Convention)
- October 2008 Praia, Cape Verde meeting's Political Declaration:  
<http://www.uneca.org/coda/unodc/PoliticalDeclarationEnglish.pdf>
- October 2008 Praia, Cape Verde meeting's Plan of Action:  
[http://www.uneca.org/coda/unodc/ECOWAS\\_DRAFT\\_RESPONSE\\_ACTION\\_PLAN\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.uneca.org/coda/unodc/ECOWAS_DRAFT_RESPONSE_ACTION_PLAN_ENGLISH.pdf)

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