

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Intermediate Committee

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### Topic 1: Developing Comprehensive Strategies to Combat Organized Crime

## **Introduction**

Organized crime is not the drug cartels or the mafia—it is a worldwide machine that perpetuates violence, corruption, and economic instability. Be it the human trafficking rings or the drug cartels, these groups are well rooted in societies across the world, taking advantage of gaps in legal frameworks, using sophisticated technology, and penetrating governments.

The figures are staggering: 40% of all homicides worldwide are connected to organized crime, the UNODC says. The economic cost? Trillions of dollars in illegal trade, money laundering, and fraud. Governments, law enforcement, and international organizations are forever trying to keep pace as criminal networks adapt, utilizing everything from cryptocurrency to AI-powered cybercrime.

In spite of decades of endeavor, the war against organized crime continues to be an uphill task. Why? Corruption, ineffective law enforcement, insufficient international collaboration, and ever-adapting criminal tactics. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a major driving force in combating these threats, urging legal reforms, intelligence sharing, capacity building, and financial tracking systems.

## **History of Conflict/Case Study**

### **Case Study: The Italian Mafia's Evolution**

The Italian Mafia, commonly referred to as Mafia, stands among the longest and best-documented crime networks in the world. From their origins of being provincial crime cartels in the 19th century,

cartels including Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta, and Camorra expanded their territories into America and Europe.

During the American Prohibition (1920–30), the mafia thrived, with billions of money being made from illicit sale of liquor, liquor-smuggling, and bribery of corrupt police officers. Even after Prohibition, such gangs went on and expanded into narcotics trade, racketeering, and corrupt politicians.

In the 1990s, Italy repressed organized crime with harsher anti-mafia laws and vigorous persecution. The 'Ndrangheta, however, still retains Europe's strongest crime group status, and its more than 70% dominance of Europe's sale of cocaine.

### **Case Study: The Yakuza – Japan's Corporate Criminals**

Unlike other crime cartels, Japan's Yakuza operates half-open, with office space, companies, and even corporate-style hierarchies. The Yakuza had between 180,000 and higher when its numbers were strongest, with their repertoire of illicit skills including money laundering, real-estate fraud, and even disaster response.

After Japan legalised anti-yakuza laws in the 2000s, the syndicates shifted into offshore money laundering and cybercrime rather than traditional crime on the streets. This demonstrates the way organised crime has been changing, reacting to changing legal and technical landscapes.

## **Current Situation**

Organized crime has evolved into more complex and more established forms into legal and illicit economies, and hence more difficult to dismember. Technology, banking networks, and the corruption of politicians have been used by crime networks to extend their tentacles. Some of the trends affecting international organized crime today are discussed below:

### **1. Cybercrime and Cyber Fraud**

Criminal groups also shifted their activities online, with cryptocurrency being used for money laundering, phishing, and for their use in ransomware. The dark web also provides space for illicit goods, from guns to identities, for police forces to fight against.

## **2. Political Corruption and Penetration**

Many organized crime networks also engage corrupt police, government officials, and owners of businesses for their protection. Corruption precludes criminals from being charged, corrupts legal systems, and brings more individuals into their networks, where governance remains weak.

## **3. Transnational Drug Trafficking**

Drug cartels, and also in East Asia and in Latin America, continue to dominate global supply networks for heroin, methamphetamine, and for cocaine, and for fentanyl. The epidemic of opioids from fentanyl, produced with productions in China and supplied by cartels from Mexico, has claimed dozens of thousands of lives annually, mostly in the USA and in Canada.

## **4. Human Trafficking**

Human Trafficking and Smuggling Criminal networks gain from victimizing vulnerable populations, forced labor, sex slavery, and human trafficking. The networks rake in billions of dollars every year even when the governments lag on border security and victim protection.

## **Definitions**

1. Organized Crime – A very organized group of people criminally engaged for money, with frequent trans-jurisdictional presence.
2. Transnational Crime describes crime with movement across international borders, including computer crime, human trafficking, and drug trafficking.
3. Money Laundering - The process of covering up illegally acquired money into legal assets.

4. Racketeering – Engaging in corrupt and dishonest trade, commonly under intimidation and threats.
5. Cybercrime – crime on the web, such as money crime, identity crime, and illicit data trading.
6. Corruption – The abuse of power for selfish purposes, and for bribery, fraud, and corruption of governmental processes.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. How can international crime cartels be more effectively countered internationally under international law enforcers?
2. What role should cybersecurity play when dealing with online money crime linked with organized crime?
3. How can investigative journalists and whistleblowers be protected from governmental reprisal?
4. Should cryptocurrency regulations be tightened up to stop money laundering for cartels?
5. How can banks and other banking and financial institutions filter and spot suspicious organized crime-related transactions?
6. What community-based interventions can decrease organized crime recruitment?
7. How can more economic opportunities be created for crime-free economies to thrive in countries?

## Topic 2: Addressing Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

### **Introduction**

Modern slavery and human trafficking are among the worst manifestations of abuse of human rights in today's world. They prey on millions of people, robbing them of their liberty and their dignity. It has been estimated by the Global Slavery Index that 50 million people worldwide are living in situations of modern slavery such as forced labor, debt bondage, and human trafficking. These are exploitative situations that disproportionately target vulnerable groups of people such as women, children, refugees, and marginalized communities. In spite of global efforts, human trafficking is a multi-billion-dollar business, driven by organized crime, corruption, lax enforcement, and demand for cheap labor and sexual exploitation. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has a central responsibility to the fight against this scourge, collaborating with member states, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and law enforcement agencies to break up trafficking networks, help victims, and build solid legal frameworks. This guide is aimed at providing a general description of human trafficking and modern slavery, looking at their history, their present state across the globe, and the potential solutions for eradicating these crimes.

### **History of Conflict/Case Study**

Human trafficking and contemporary slavery are historically rooted, with origins tracing back to colonial slavery, indentured labor, and forced servitude in times of war. But the contemporary variant of these abuses has evolved into a global network of crime fostered by economic disparities, conflicts, and corruption.

#### **Case Study: Blood Diamonds and Africa's Forced Labor**

The industry of diamonds, more notably in Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, has been historically linked with forced labor and contemporary slavery. In the late 20th century,

forced labor from such insurgent forces as the Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) mined for diamonds, then had them traded for use in financing civil conflicts and buying guns and other munitions. Even after the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, established in 2003, sought to end the sale of blood diamonds, illicit mining and forced labor continue in some of its territories. The workforce, including children from 10 years and up, has been forced into inhuman working conditions, extreme brutality, and low remunerations.

### **Case Study: Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia**

The continent of Southeast Asia has been regarded as a human trafficking hotspot, with nations such as Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar being key sources, transit points, and destination points for traffickers. The victims, mostly women and children, are promised jobs, then trafficked into sex trade and forced employment in such industries such as fishing, construction, and domestic employment. The Thai fishery industry, for instance, has been shamed for its use of trafficked labor from such sources as Myanmar and Cambodian sources. Numerous such people are forced into working for years on end, being beaten and tortured, and even being killed on the seas, with limited, if any, means of escaping.

## **Current Situation**

### **1. Lack of Effective Law Enforcement and Corruption**

Governments don't have the necessary means, training, and will for effective anti-human trafficking. Officials take bribes from traffickers, and their illicit practices continue unimpeded without checks and balances.

### **2. War and Political Instability in Some Countries**

Those regions under war and with populations on the move, such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Sudan, are victimized from widespread human trafficking because criminals capitalize on such

populations' vulnerability. A significant amount of such women and children in such centers for refugees fall victim to forced employment and sex commerce.

### **3. The Power of Technology for Trafficking**

The use of the dark web, social networks, and encrypted message apps has made traffickers more effective. The use of such means for online employment for forced employment and sex commerce has grown, and the problem of tracing such illicit means for police has also expanded with them.

### **4. Consumer Demand for Low-Cost Employment and Sex Commerce**

A key force for today's slavery has been consumer demand for cheap goods and cheap sex. Traffickers use such people for factories, agriculture, mining, and domestic jobs under exploitative terms for producing goods for international markets.

## **Essential Vocabularies**

1. Human Trafficking: The transportation, transfer, harboring, receipt, or recruitment of individuals with force, fraud, or coercion for purposes of exploitation. Also means forced labor, sex slavery, and sale of human organs for money.
2. Modern Slavery: A general description of practices such as forced labor, debt bondage, forced marriage, and human trafficking. The main distinction from traditional slavery is the fact that, unlike with legal title of individuals, there exists today slavery under force, limitation of freedom, and exploitation rather than legal title of individuals.
3. Forced Labor: A practice of contemporary slavery where individuals are forced into working under intimidation, force, or false representation, and with minimal, if any, remunerations.
4. Debt Bondage: A process where an individual works with the view of paying for a loan, under unequal terms where the debt accumulates rather than being repaid.

5. Sex Trafficking: A practice of human trafficking where individuals are forced, threatened, or deceived into sex for sale, with force, intimidation, or false representation threatened if not obeyed.
6. Blood Diamonds: Diamonds produced under forced labor in combat zones, whose proceeds are being used for financing organized crime and combat.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. How can international networks of law enforcers be more aggressively coordinated against networks of traffickers of human beings?
2. What legal frameworks need to be bolstered for traffickers and corrupt officials accountable?
3. What can be done for more effective victim-support systems for trafficked people from the government and NGOs?
4. What can be private industry's contribution towards the prevention of forced labor and modern slavery?
5. What can be the contribution of education and campaigns for the prevention of vulnerable people from being victimized?
6. What can be steps for industries with a history of forced use of labor to be monitored and regulated by the country?



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