



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9497th meeting

Thursday, 7 December 2023, 9 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Noboa Azín/Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. França Danese
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Cleland
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Ms. Dlhovo
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

Transnational organized crime, growing challenges and new threats

Letter dated 1 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2023/933)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

Transnational organized crime, growing challenges and new threats

Letter dated 1 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2023/933)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Ministers and the other high-level representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Türkiye, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Ms. Melani Cammett, Clarence Dillon Professor of International Affairs in the Government Department at Harvard University; and Ms. Victoria Nyanjura, Founder and General Director of Women in Action for Women.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: Her Excellency Mrs. Hedda Samson, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and His Excellency Mr. Paul Beresford-Hill, Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/933, which contains the text of a letter dated 1 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

The Council has before it the text of a statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank the Council members for their valuable contributions to this statement.

In accordance with the understanding reached among the members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2023/6.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in Spanish*): I commend the initiative of Ecuador to focus attention on the growing threats posed by transnational organized crime. Often invisible but always insidious, transnational organized crime is a vicious threat to peace, security and sustainable development wherever it operates. And it operates everywhere — in all countries, rich and poor, North and South, developed and developing. Meanwhile, cyberspace is a virtual El Dorado for criminals.

(*spoke in English*)

The activities of transnational organized crime take many forms, but the ramifications are the same: weakened governance, corruption and lawlessness, open violence, death and destruction. Illicit financial flows are not abstract figures; they amount to billions of missed development opportunities, lost livelihoods and worsened poverty. On the African continent alone, more money is lost due to tax evasion, money laundering and illicit financial flows than comes in through official development assistance. Human trafficking — a heinous violation of fundamental human rights that preys on the most vulnerable — continues with impunity. If anything, it is growing worse, especially for women and girls, who make up the majority of trafficked people identified globally. Drug trafficking — the most lucrative business for transnational organized crime groups — is at record-highs, creating vectors of violence that span the globe. The growing illicit trade

in firearms is fuelling conflicts, killing and maiming millions and contributing to a dramatic increase in criminal activities in many areas around the world. That was a central issue in my discussions at the latest summit of the Caribbean Community. And trafficking in natural resources, wildlife and other commodities and services is destroying people and planet. All those activities are increasingly interlinked and sponsored by true multinational corporations of global crime.

Amid a world in crisis, illicit economies find fertile ground to grow. The socioeconomic fallout from the coronavirus disease pandemic and its uneven recovery, widening inequalities, a raging cost-of-living crisis, shrinking fiscal space and worsening poverty and unemployment all weaken State authority, fray the social fabric and heighten insecurity. Transnational organized crime and conflict feed off each other. Crime is a catalyst for conflict. And when conflict rages, crime thrives. It undermines the authority and effectiveness of State institutions, erodes the rule of law and destabilizes law enforcement structures.

From Afghanistan to Colombia, the production and trafficking of illicit drugs fuelled brutal and long-lasting conflicts. And all across the world, criminal groups spread violence, fear and insecurity in their effort to control trafficking routes. Haiti is caught up in a vicious cycle of State collapse, escalating gang violence and a growing illicit trade in firearms smuggled into the country. That illicit trade incentivizes gangs to gain control of ports, highways and other critical infrastructure. In Myanmar, human trafficking and online scams, often run from outside the country, are flourishing in an environment of violence, repression and the erosion of the rule of law following the military takeover in 2021. In many conflicts, the activities of transnational criminal groups and armed groups overlap and intersect, making conflict resolution even harder.

The links between organized crime and terrorism are a matter of particular concern. Organized crime groups develop opportunistic alliances with armed actors designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council, often to profit from various forms of trafficking. At the same time, terrorist groups seek out connections with organized crime to fund their activities.

In the Sahel, the illicit trade in fuel, drugs, arms and natural resources is providing operational resources to armed groups across the region, threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions. Criminal networks use the vast sums of money generated by their activities to hire

armed groups to protect them, adding new layers of complexities to ongoing conflicts, as is the case in Libya. And in Somalia, Al-Shabaab's control of the illicit trade in charcoal radiates insecurity across the region and is devastating forests, with dramatic ramifications.

The Security Council has long recognized the danger posed by transnational organized crime to international peace and security, including in resolution 2482 (2019). But we must do more to strengthen our defences. I see three priorities for action.

First, we must strengthen cooperation. Criminal groups work across borders and geographies. We must meet this global challenge with a global response. Multilateral cooperation is the only credible path to target the criminal dynamics that fuel violence and prolong cycles of conflict. We have the blueprint: the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three Additional Protocols. I call on all Member States to fully implement the Convention and work together and assist each other in investigating and prosecuting organized crime groups.

We are also supporting Member States to address the links between transnational organized crime and terrorism through the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. And I am hopeful that Member States will reach consensus on a new treaty on cybercrime to deepen cooperation while protecting human rights online — in line with my report on *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982). Stronger international and regional cooperation is critical to facilitating the collection, sharing and exchange of data, because we cannot target what we cannot see. Organized crime has been quick to exploit cryptocurrencies and digital tools. Our response must be even faster, more organized and more data-driven.

Secondly, we must strengthen the rule of law, which is foundational to our efforts to find peaceful solutions to conflicts and tackle transnational organized crime's multifaceted threats. When the rule of law is effective, it has unmatched potential to build trust between institutions and the people they serve. It creates a level playing field and helps reduce corruption. It underpins human rights and enables sustainable social, political and economic development, leaving no one behind. All stakeholders, Member States, regional organizations, civil society and the private sector have a responsibility to uphold the rule of law. But the reality today is that many countries are at grave risk of the rule of lawlessness. From unconstitutional seizures of

power to the trampling of human rights, Governments themselves are contributing to disorder and the lack of accountability. When the rule of law is weak, the consequences reach across all areas of public and private life, impunity prevails, crime flourishes and the risk of violent conflict grows exponentially. My new vision for the rule of law is aimed at reinforcing its centrality in all activities of our Organization. We stand ready to support Member States in their efforts to strengthen the rule of law through our country teams around the world.

Thirdly, we must strengthen prevention and foster inclusion. That means redoubling our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, our best instrument for creating economic and social conditions in which organized crime cannot succeed. It means ensuring respect for all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural. It means tackling cybercrime and more effectively thwarting criminal groups that use technology at every stage of their malicious activities. It means tailoring crime prevention strategies to reflect the lived experiences of all communities and constituencies, especially minorities, women and young people. And it means advancing gender equality, because women's effective participation is essential to successful conflict prevention, peacemaking and sustaining peace.

Time and again, purely security and law-enforcement responses have not only shown their limits, but they have been shown to be self-defeating. We must strive for a better balance between preventive and security responses. Combating crime must never be used as an excuse for trampling people's human rights.

(spoke in French)

We must remain alert at every stage to the ever-changing nature of organized crime and reimagine the essence of our approaches to our working methods and our cooperation with others. Our efforts must be coherent, coordinated, context-specific and focused on prevention. The Security Council has a critical role to play in our collective fight against organized crime. But to succeed, we must act together and stand united. Together, let us commit to creating a more peaceful and stable world where organized crime has no place.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Waly.

Ms. Waly *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank the Security Council for the opportunity to be here today. I would like to echo the words of the Secretary-General and to welcome Ecuador's initiative and the Council's decision to prioritize today's debate on transnational organized crime.

(spoke in English)

Organized crime is a complex phenomenon driven by diverse factors, from poverty and inequalities to collusion and power dynamics to fragile rule-of-law and weak institutions. It transcends national borders and has local, regional and global impact. And today, amid growing conflict and instability, organized crime is gaining a foothold in various corners of the world, undermining international peace and security. It is time to take strategic, coordinated and collective action against its threat.

Around the world, illicit markets are expanding and diversifying. Old threats persist, from booming cocaine markets to illicit firearms flowing into volatile areas, and emerging challenges proliferate, with synthetic drugs and cybercrime evolving faster than the world can keep up. Across continents, organized crime is a multibillion-dollar industry, driving violence and exploitation. The global study of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on homicide, launching tomorrow here in New York, reveals that organized criminal groups and gangs are responsible for almost a quarter of all homicides worldwide. Human traffickers exploit people affected by violence, economic hardship and environmental degradation. In many cases, the victims are mostly women and children. Migrant smuggling networks thrive in the same conditions, and non-State armed groups, including terrorist groups, use abducted children as combatants, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

In a context of armed conflict and volatility, organized crime can often be a fundamental component of the cycle of violence. Criminal interests can ignite or inflame conflict and tensions. Ongoing conflicts are prolonged by criminal activities that fund and benefit from hostilities, and those same criminal interests obstruct peacebuilding and a return to the rule of law. We are seeing those dynamics play out before us in various parts of the world today. In places in which State control is absent or contested, non-State actors are known to benefit from transnational organized crime and to control trafficking routes and illicit markets. The Secretary-General alluded to some of

those situations in his statement. UNODC analysis has shown how criminal markets overlap with crisis and armed conflict.

In Haiti, UNODC's assessment has shown how violent gangs are competing for control of key infrastructure and drug-trafficking routes with the help of increasingly sophisticated firearms, trafficked into the country mainly from North America. In every case, corruption is both a source of revenue and an enabler of illicit flows at Haiti's borders and elsewhere.

In the Sahel, our transnational organized crime threats assessment show that non-State armed groups, some of them designated terrorist groups, are central actors in illicit markets. They facilitate gold and fuel trafficking in areas under their control, taking advantage of rampant unregulated activity. They collect taxes on the trade of falsified medical products and benefit from instability.

In Myanmar, non-State armed groups and transnational organized crime syndicates dominate methamphetamine production and trafficking in the Golden Triangle. The same border areas where synthetic drugs are produced have also become home to illegal casinos and online scams with global reach. Opium-poppy cultivation in Myanmar is back to levels not seen since 2015, as its cultivation in Afghanistan has dropped by 95 per cent.

The effects of organized crime are interconnected, and they also contribute to other global challenges. In the Amazon basin, for example, drug trafficking intersects with illegal mining, logging and other crimes that affect the environment, harming local and indigenous communities and undermining global efforts to combat climate change. The impact of organized crime is being manifested in alarming new ways, ranging from shocking forms of violence in European port cities connected with the drug trade to political assassinations and the infiltration of prisons in parts of Latin America.

(spoke in French)

Organized crime infiltrates our economies and institutions through corruption. Criminal networks exploit trade practices to facilitate their operations. They maintain ties with various elites and attempt to influence politics in certain countries. They use particular professions, especially legal professions, to escape justice. These networks also exploit financial structures to launder the proceeds of crime and benefit

from broad informal sectors in many developing countries and gaps in the regulation of virtual assets.

Besides that, organized crime is becoming more agile and decentralized. In certain economic sectors, we have seen a change in the organic structure of those groups, which are less hierarchical, more fragmented and grouped into networks of specialists who provide services and collaborate with one another. Digital markets and cryptocurrencies allow illicit transactions to extend their reach and to be faster and more anonymous. Furthermore, criminal groups are also targeting computer systems, giving rise to new forms of crime.

(spoke in English)

The costs and risks of engaging in criminal activity have never been lower, and the global threat posed by organized crime has reached new levels of complexity. To respond, we need institutions capable of delivering justice and ending impunity, as well as resilient communities. We also need to invest far more resources to confront illicit markets that are worth trillions of dollars. As the Secretary-General has outlined, we must strengthen the rule of law, enhance international cooperation, and improve prevention and inclusion. As the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, UNODC's vision and work are anchored in those priorities.

To strengthen the rule of law, we support law enforcement operations and improve capacities to disrupt increasingly sophisticated criminal groups. We strengthen financial investigations and asset forfeiture networks. We help to develop laws, policies and institutions centred on integrity and human rights, and ensure that prisons are places of rehabilitation rather than radicalization or criminal operations.

To improve international cooperation, we harmonize responses through the Conventions on Organized Crime and on Corruption, and we connect practitioners directly across borders and regions. UNODC is establishing networks, repositories and platforms for criminal justice officials to collaborate and exchange information with ease. We are helping to set up border liaison offices, including in sensitive border areas that are often exploited by organized crime. We are also targeting stronger partnerships with and among regional organizations such as the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of American States and the African Union.

To foster prevention and inclusion, we are stepping up our focus on amplifying voices, providing opportunities and increasing resilience. We help communities to find licit, dignified livelihoods that break cycles of crime and poverty, including in places such as Colombia, Afghanistan and Myanmar, and we work closely with civil society. Throughout all organized crime interventions, we emphasize the protection and empowerment of women and girls. They face exploitation and gender-based violence, yet they are also leaders whom we need for peace and security and the rule of law. As underlined in the Secretary-General's new vision for the rule of law, people and their needs must be at the centre of our fight against organized crime.

The nexus of peace and security and the rule of law has never been more relevant. The Security Council and the United Nations system must take action against the devastating impacts of organized crime. I encourage Council members to consider the following: first, to support and invest in improved data collection in order to better anticipate and monitor trafficking and organized crime dynamics and respond proactively; secondly, to integrate measures against organized crime in peace and security interventions and resolutions; thirdly, to promote the inclusion of organized crime prevention in sustainable development cooperation frameworks.

Lastly, I would strongly encourage the Council to continue devoting its attention to the critical threat of transnational organized crime, which underpins many of the peace and security challenges it addresses. UNODC is committed to providing reliable data and analysis and supporting operational capacities on the ground to enable an informed and effective response. With political will and collective action, we can ensure that organized crime can no longer sustain its business model on instability and fragility.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Waly for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Cammett.

Ms. Cammett: I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting.

Transnational organized crime encompasses a variety of markets, such as human trafficking and smuggling; illegal trade in flora, fauna and counterfeit

goods; drug production and smuggling; arms trafficking; financial and cybercrimes; and other illicit flows. Key actors include hacking groups, gangs, drug cartels, pirates, traffickers, mafia organizations and armed non-State actors. Often, the same actor is involved in multiple types of illicit markets. Sometimes, State agencies and State officials themselves are involved with criminal organizations.

Transnational organized crime is not new. Some indicators, such as homicide rates, suggest that, in the aggregate, certain forms of crime are either decreasing or have remained flat in some regions. However, certain criminal markets appear to be rising. Trade in types of illegal wildlife has increased, as have drug production and smuggling. Measures of drug consumption rates, production and cultivation rates and seizures of illegal drugs point to a sharp spike in illicit drug markets.

Transnational organized crime has spread geographically, with Europe showing the greatest increase and Asia featuring the highest aggregate presence of criminal organizations. Areas with weaker governance and conflict-affected areas are especially likely to host production and transit zones. Cross-border areas such as the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, the Great Lakes region in sub-Saharan Africa, the tri-border area shared by Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, the United States-Mexico border, the Golden Triangle and others are key nodes through which illicit goods and people pass. Insurgents operating in those zones have diversified into various streams of organized crime to generate revenue for their activities. Some subnational regions are effectively governed by criminal organizations.

Technological developments have dramatically altered the nature of transnational organized crime today. Illicit markets and counterfeit products, industrial waste and human organs are some examples of newer types of flows. New technologies have transformed old forms of criminal activities. Today money laundering has evolved dramatically, with electronic money transferring systems and integrated financial markets. Criminal organizations have even harnessed basic technologies to their benefit, such as three-dimensional printing and drones, to create weapons and to facilitate surveillance. Advances in Internet technologies have led to an explosion of cybercrime that has global ramifications.

Transnational organized crime has significant consequences for the health and well-being of people

across the world and for the political systems and economies that shape their lives. Perhaps the most obvious consequence is violence. Nowhere is that more apparent than in Latin America, which stands out as the global region with the highest number of homicides in the world. In fact, a public health study in Mexico found that life expectancy at birth had actually declined in the first decade of the twenty-first century as a result of homicides. The aggregate rate of homicides has dipped slightly in Latin America in recent years, but some countries in the region, such as Ecuador, Chile and Haiti, have exhibited extremely high increases.

Some forms of organized crime are highly gendered, with women and girls accounting for almost 75 per cent of all victims of human trafficking. Over half of all forms of trafficking are related to sexual exploitation, which almost entirely targets women and girls. Other forms, such as forced labour and the illegal trade in organs, disproportionately affect men.

Transnational organized crime contributes to the widespread perception of rising insecurity. Survey data shows that organized crime unsurprisingly increases fear among citizens. In 2021, nearly half of all people across Latin America reported that they felt unsafe in their neighbourhoods. Rates of reported insecurity are even higher among women, young people and low-income citizens.

Threats to democracy are a second consequence of transnational organized crime, with both direct and indirect ramifications for democracy. The direct effects include reduced voter turnout, threats to freedom of speech and the press and targeted assassinations of politicians and political candidates. In areas with organized criminal groups, criminal gangs view voting and other forms of political engagement as a threat to their survival, which is an incentive for them to deter, surveil and punish citizens who participate in politics. Criminal organizations are also wary of party alternation, which can lead to shifts in security policies that jeopardize their operations. Criminal organizations intervene in politics by using violence to target politicians and candidates who threaten their interests. In Mexico, hundreds of politicians have been victims of so-called narco assassinations. In Italy, the Mafia has used violence to reduce the efforts by State officials and politicians to rein in its activities. And more generally, criminal groups use violence to suppress the spread of information about their activities. The Committee to Protect Journalists has pointed out that criminal

organizations are responsible for a large number of murders of journalists who are covering their activities.

The major indirect effects of transnational organized crime on democracy include its impact on the rule of law, declining mass support for democracy and reduced social and political trust in general. With respect to the rule of law, Government responses to organized crime have often entailed the militarization of local law enforcement or even the use of the army to run domestic policing operations. Such practices can undermine key elements of democracy, such as due process and the protection of human rights. Real and perceived violent threats from criminal organizations reduce constraints on the use of torture by Government agencies. In parts of the Balkans, Latin America and other regions, some Government officials allegedly have collusive relationships with organized crime, blurring the very boundaries between the State and illicit actors.

Transnational organized crime also undermines democracy by reducing trust among citizens in democratic governance itself and increasing support for authoritarian rule. Effective responses to the challenge of transnational organized crime require both supply-side and demand-side approaches, because the fact is that transnational organized crime is a set of markets that have both supply and demand components. On the supply side, a coordinated approach across Governments is essential for tracking criminal organizations and ultimately curbing their activities and holding them to account. International cooperation on the issue has increased in recent years but could be substantially improved, partly because it has been difficult for some Governments, particularly democratic and more authoritarian Governments, to cooperate on certain features of transnational organized crime.

Reducing the demand for goods and services from illicit markets is also vital. The decriminalization of some illegal flows, such as certain types of drugs, may help to reduce transnational organized crime. Likewise, paying attention to the ways in which immigration policies incentivize human smuggling may help to address trafficking, which thrives in the context of highly restrictive immigration and asylum regimes.

In conclusion, efforts to crack down on transnational organized crime will have limited effects if they do not also seriously address the demand-side factors that encourage transnational illicit markets to thrive in the first place.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Cammett for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Nyanjura.

Ms. Nyanjura: As I speak to the Council today, I am doing so not as a victim but as a survivor, in a testament to the strength that resides within each of us even in the face of unimaginable adversity. My journey through the darkness of sexual violence began on a night in October back in 1996, when members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) terrorist group abducted me, a 14-year-old schoolgirl, along with many other young girls from my school. The Lord's Resistance Army has been described as one of Central Africa's cruellest and most enduring armed groups of the past 30 years. The abductions of more than 30,000 children for use as child soldiers, sex slaves and human pack-mules have been attributed to the LRA. I endured unspeakable physical and mental abuse, as well as sexual exploitation, during my harrowing eight years in captivity. On a rainy night in 2004, at that point with two children whom I had given birth to in captivity, I made the courageous choice to escape or to die trying my luck.

Organized crimes with sexual violence at their core are a harsh reality that many like me have had to confront. Such crimes not only strip us of physical autonomy but erode our sense of self-worth and human dignity, leaving deep scars in the fabric of our lives. It is crucial to recognize that sexual violence within the realm of organized crime is not confined to the individual who is violated. It ripples through families, communities and society at large. The trauma endured by survivors is not just personal but a collective community burden that demands a united front against the perpetrators and systems that enable such terrible acts. As we discuss organized crime today, we should remember that merely condemning these acts is not enough. We must also address the root causes and systematic failures that perpetuate them. Education, awareness and a commitment to dismantling structures that protect the perpetrators of sexual violence are essential steps towards eradicating this scourge.

Moreover, survivors must be heard, their accounts of sexual and physical violence must be believed and their local communities must protect them. Additional abuse makes their situations even harder. It is therefore important for communities to protect them from further abuse and support them on their long road to healing. The stigma surrounding sexual violence often silences victims, allowing organized crime to

flourish unchecked. It is our collective responsibility to break that silence, amplify the voices of survivors and create societies in which no one has to endure the horrors that far too many have faced. Society must recognize what organized criminal organizations take for granted — that our strength lies in solidarity, and our collective action makes it work.

That is why it is crucial for Governments, communities, civil society organizations and private corporations to support survivors in their long and painful journey towards reassembling the pieces of their shattered lives. No survivor should ever feel alone. Having worked at different levels to break the silence around the challenges faced by women and children during and after war, my life's calling has been to seek restorative justice for survivors of war and sexual violence. Survivors must have a seat at the table where decisions are made and policies and programmes are formed. From my own experience, I can attest that having a voice in matters affecting our lives is a critical component of the healing process.

In conclusion, let us use today's discussion as a catalyst for change. Let our collective outrage fuel a commitment to collective action aimed at dismantling the networks of organized crime and eradicating sexual violence from our communities. By standing together, we can ensure that the stories of survivors become beacons of hope, guiding us towards a future where justice prevails and every individual can live free from the shadows of organized crime.

I thank members for their attention and for their commitment to this cause.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Nyanjura for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador.

I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his statement, which raises crucial points that the Security Council will need to consider with increasing urgency. I would also like to thank the briefers for their presentations. Their statements reflect the threat to peace and security posed by transnational organized crime. That threat has already been confirmed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, civil society and academia.

Illicit arms and drug trafficking, migrant smuggling and human trafficking are just some

examples of the activities of criminal gangs that affect our citizens' peace and our nations' development. We must always remember that, tragically, such activities disproportionately harm women and girls. Transnational organized crime has caused more deaths than many of the global conflicts of the past 20 years combined. In that context, in order to combat the situation, the United Nations must take a comprehensive approach, in which the Security Council acts within its competence to promote peace for the entire international community.

Resolution 1459 (2003) on the Kimberley Process, which seeks to eradicate blood diamonds, was adopted unanimously two decades ago. The resolution demonstrates that it is possible for the Council to have the capacity to contribute to cross-cutting efforts to address multidimensional challenges. In Haiti, for example, in 2023, approximately 4,000 people were killed, 1,500 wounded and nearly 3,000 kidnapped, solely in connection with gang violence. Over the past two years, more civilians have been killed in Haiti than in several conflicts involving multiple States in that same period. In the words of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, the situation is cataclysmic.

The Council can, and must, exercise its responsibility in a cooperative way, whether the threat is traditional or emerging. It has done so on various subjects on its agenda, such as the Group of Five for the Sahel and the situation in Afghanistan and in Haiti. The Council also authorized, on 2 October, the deployment of a Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti, which we hope can be formed as soon as possible under Kenya's leadership. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Ecuador's commitment to continuing to lead, jointly with the United States of America, on matters in the Council related to Haiti.

Latin America and other regions of the world have also suffered from the connections between organized crime and insurgency. That threat generates instability and has become the basis of border conflicts and regional and global tensions. Ecuador has been affected by the wave of transnational organized crime, and its links with armed groups threaten the rule of law, State control and border security. This is not merely a concept — historically, Ecuador has suffered from the impact of non-international armed conflicts that take place outside our country. Ecuador, which has long been considered a country of peace, has, in recent years, seen an unprecedented increase in violence,

falling victim to transnational organized crime that seeks to influence the control of territory and weaken borders to benefit its routes. Murders in Ecuador have seen an unacceptable increase in recent years owing to the penetration of international criminal gangs.

I reiterate what I said at my inauguration as Constitutional President of Ecuador — I believe in a State that has as its primary goal reducing violence and making progress a habit. Transnational crime demands a strong and timely transnational response. That is why one of my Government's priorities is to support international cooperation and deploy all necessary efforts along our border areas and in the interior of the country to deal with all forms of violence.

In the light of transnational threats, there is no alternative to a transnational response. The same thing was true for the pandemic — as long as one State is not safe, no other State can be. The Council should therefore encourage increased cooperation, capacity-building and technology transfer to overcome the challenges presented by security and cybersecurity threats. Early-warning mechanisms, crime prevention efforts and the promotion of criminal justice should be expanded and incorporated into peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. They are indispensable in cases of security sector reform.

Fourteen years ago, France requested a meeting to address this issue under the theme of threats to international peace and security. Today we aim to continue that proposal by providing greater support to existing instruments and tools as well as by renewing the Council's support for those efforts to combat transnational organized crime and terrorism. We also therefore joined France in proposing the presidential statement that was adopted by the Council (S/PRST/2023/6). We are grateful for the valuable support received from all delegations in that effort, and we are sure that it will be yet another tool to advance that effort. Tomorrow will also mark 14 years since the Security Council opened the debate on drug trafficking as a threat to international security, under the agenda of peace and security in Africa (see S/PV.6233). It is our responsibility, as an elected member of the Council, to strengthen the efforts that were undertaken by other delegations to prevent armed violence.

Wars, conflicts and transnational organized crime have one ingredient in common: weapons. For that very reason, on 15 December, we will hold an open debate on

the threat posed to peace and security by the diversion, trafficking and misuse of weapons.

Peace is the central promise of the Charter of the United Nations, but what peace can there be amid an upsurge in organized crime? We agree with the Secretary-General that peace is a global public good that we must protect and manage.

I wanted to come personally to the Council to reiterate my Government's commitment to the search for peace, which includes the threats that we are suffering within our borders. For my Government and for me, personally, there is a standing debt since, one of our presidential candidates was assassinated. Similarly, in two caravans, we suffered armed attacks, and almost every day, over the past 60 days, we have received death threats, as have our ministers and their families.

Peace is also a debt we owe to our voters, including many young people and women. In the first round of voting, 58 per cent of voters chose women, with an average age of 33. The most affected and marginalized groups therefore believed that a young 35-year-old candidate could make a difference. I must therefore do everything I can in order to help bring about that change. I hope that with the help and cooperation of everyone, we can do just that.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique.

Ms. Dlhovo (Mozambique) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Mozambique extends its warm congratulations to Ecuador for assuming the monthly presidency of the Security Council in the current month of December. We commend Ecuador for convening this timely and important high-level open debate on the theme "Threats to international peace and security: Transnational organized crime, growing challenges and new threats". We applaud His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for his insightful remarks. We also thank the briefers for their thoughtful and pertinent contributions.

Transnational organized crime is one of the major threats to peace, security and prosperity of humankind. Although this illegal activity does not take place on defined battlefields, it undermines our efforts aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Transnational organized crime poses a significant

and growing threat to national and international security, with a negative impact on public safety, the lives of communities, the consolidation of democratic institutions and socioeconomic stability.

Criminal networks are not only expanding, but also diversifying their activities, resulting today in the convergence of threats, with destabilizing effects. We are deeply concerned about the growing threats that transnational organized crime poses to international peace and security in different regions of the world, including with regard to arms trafficking, illicit drugs, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons, money laundering, terrorism and corruption, among others. Those malicious activities are widening their ramifications across borders and, in that regard, affecting global security and well-being.

In the same vein, the growing path of organized and transnational crime is negatively impacting the modus vivendi of our societies and local communities, as well as the performance of our economies, and it is compounded by existing complex challenges such as underdevelopment, political instability, armed conflicts and corruption, to name a few.

Criminal networks operate by exploiting our countries' vulnerabilities, including poverty, lack of social and economic opportunities and unemployment. Our efforts must therefore be geared towards resolving the root causes of this problem. We must invest more in the promotion of the rule of law and social justice, in education and health, in the fight against corruption in all its forms and at all levels, in the means of combating and dismantling criminal networks, including regional and international cooperation.

The fight against transnational organized crime requires the engagement of all countries. It requires our collective responsibility and coordinated efforts for an effective response at a global level. In order to effectively tackle transnational organized crime amid the growth and sophistication of these criminal networks and operations, we also need robust and efficient legal systems, well-trained and well-equipped police forces and advanced means and technologies, as well as collaboration and mutual assistance among our countries.

In order to address transnational organized crime and within the framework of relevant United Nations, African Union and Southern African Development Community instruments, on 28 August the Government

of Mozambique adopted law 14/2023, which establishes the legal regime and measures to prevent and combat money laundering and terrorist financing and repeals the previous law.

The newly adopted legal instrument seeks to strengthen the existing national legislation to combat transnational organized crime, trafficking in small arms and light weapons, trafficking in persons, drugs, trafficking in precious minerals, money laundering, corruption, kidnappings and homicides, among others. Our policies also aim to cut off the sources of logistical support for criminal activities.

In conclusion, and as party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, of 15 November 2000, I wish to affirm that Mozambique is undertaking efforts at the national level, bilaterally, within the framework of the Southern African Development Community and the African Union, in the fight against transnational organized crime, one of the major threats to international peace and security today and a phenomenon for which we need to combine efforts if we are to succeed. Without a doubt, transnational organized crime requires an appropriate international response.

Mr. Cleland (Ghana): Ghana would like to thank you, Mr. President, and your delegation, Ecuador, for choosing to highlight, during your presidency of the Security Council this month, the significant and growing threat that transnational organized crime poses to global peace and security.

We are grateful for the statement of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and extend our appreciation for the briefings by Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Professor Melani Cammett, Director of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University.

As the concept note for today's meeting (S/2023/933, annex) rightfully emphasizes, transnational organized crime, covering a wide array of illicit activities, is, by itself, a threat to the stability and development of any society. In its evolving form and through its links with terrorism, violent extremism and maritime piracy, it poses an even more formidable menace to international peace and security through its cross-border impact.

In several parts of Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Asia and the Caribbean, we have witnessed the disastrous consequences that the looting of natural

resources, the kidnapping of people, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and the illicit narcotic trade have had on the capacity of States to maintain their stability and sustain the peace. We therefore welcome today's open debate as an opportunity for the Council to reinforce concerted and collaborative global action to effectively address that pressing challenge for a safer and more secure world.

We cannot continue to allow whole populations to be held to ransom, such as in Haiti; we cannot maintain ignorance of the effects that illicit trade in natural resources has had in destabilizing States in the Great Lakes region; and we cannot refuse to act in reversing the cocktail of illicit cross-border activities that continues to fund violent extremism and terrorism in the Sahel, as well as in the Horn of Africa. As a Council, our responsibility, I believe, is to identify the gaps that allow such crimes to thrive and to galvanize global, regional and national actions in closing them, so as to safeguard the peace, enhance security and, through the upholding of the rule of law, create a conducive environment for sustainable development and global prosperity.

In making Ghana's contribution to today's debate, I would like to highlight four main points.

First, in recognition of its convening power, the Council should seek to deepen the guidance it provides to the broader United Nations system on the evolving threat and the required coordinated actions necessary to address the phenomenon. That would require, besides such high-level debates, setting out the Council's thinking on the challenges and the way forward, encouragement for the provision of technical assistance to States in need, the enforcement of compliance with sanctions regimes and the facilitation of international cooperation. The Council can certainly foster collaboration, advance international norms and help mobilize the necessary resources to combat that threat.

Secondly, technological advancements have provided both opportunities and challenges in the fight against criminal networks. While criminals exploit technology to engage in cybercrime, money laundering and drug trafficking on a transnational scale, States, united by their common resolve, can turn the tide by harnessing the same technology to detect, investigate and prosecute such unlawful activities. By pooling our resources together and leveraging technology, we can stay a step ahead of criminals through a strengthening

of cyberdefences, the responsible use of artificial intelligence for data analysis and predictive policing, and the promotion of digital literacy to prevent and reduce online crimes.

Thirdly, in addressing transnational organized crime, it is imperative to be gender-sensitive and to recognize the distinct impact of the consequences of such illicit activities on women and girls, who are very often the main victims. By adopting a comprehensive and gender-sensitive approach, we can help to provide accessible and effective support services tailored to the specific needs of that vulnerable group, especially in response to trafficking, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. That approach should also empower young people, including young women, to prevent such crimes and promote community resilience.

Empowering women and young people and promoting their active participation in law enforcement and judicial systems would also help to strengthen national responses and address the root causes of those crimes. That inclusive approach is essential for safeguarding both those who have fallen victim to transnational organized crime and those who are susceptible to becoming victims.

Fourthly, international and regional cooperation is crucial in addressing the cross-border challenges posed by transnational organized crime. Strengthening information-sharing mechanisms, facilitating mutual legal assistance and conducting joint operations and investigations among law enforcement agencies and judicial systems are key to dismantling criminal networks. By enhancing intelligence-sharing, bolstering law enforcement capabilities and fostering international cooperation, we can effectively disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal networks. That collaborative approach will also allow for addressing underlying issues such as corruption and weak governance, thereby reducing vulnerabilities that criminals exploit.

I would like to conclude with the words of my compatriot, Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General. He once said:

“We may come from different corners of the world, our skins may vary in colour, our languages may be different, but our destinies are tied together.”

Mr. Annan’s profound statement still resonates today and reminds us of our collective responsibility as global citizens to disrupt those criminal networks and build a safer, more secure world for all.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on taking the initiative of holding this important debate, which affords us the opportunity to address the issue of transnational organized crime, which is a growing threat to international peace and security.

I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his enlightening briefing. I would also like to thank the Director-General of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Ms. Ghada Waly; Professor Melani Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura for her moving testimony.

The fact that transnational organized crime has taken root in a number of grey areas around the world makes it a formidable factor in the destabilization of entire regions. It is not only one of the main sources of insecurity, but also a major challenge to the political, social and cultural stability and economic growth in many countries. Crime contributes to corruption, which contaminates political life, undermines social values, weakens the economic fabric and compromises development. Conflicts, terrorism and uncontrolled migration are among the factors contributing to the fragility of entire African regions and the failure of a number of those States. However, above all, the new security risks generated by transnational organized crime are of particular concern because they weaken the authority of States in certain areas.

Transnational crime is driven by vulnerabilities stemming from structural deficits caused by the fragility of States, together with those of judicial and security institutions, and is strengthened in contexts of conflict, taking different forms ranging from money laundering to drug and arms trafficking, as well as human trafficking, cybercrime, corruption, the illicit trade in wildlife and the illicit export of natural resources.

The illicit export of natural resources is a major source of financing for armed groups, terrorist groups and transnational criminal networks. Africa, a continent with countless natural resources, is exposed to organized trafficking, which contributes to spreading terror across cities and towns, where people indiscriminately suffer despicable atrocities. Criminal gangs finance themselves through multifaceted resource supply channels, developing underground criminal economies in certain parts of States and cross-border areas, which finance armed extremist and terrorist groups.

That parallel economy is maintained by armed gangs, security companies, buyers and brokers, and clandestine exporters, most of whom have regional and international affiliates. The absence of genuine inter-State and regional cooperation is fuelling the growth of transnational crime in Africa and throughout the world and contributing to the creation of veritable centres of power.

Strengthening cross-border security cooperation through joint regional operations, the sharing of financial and security information among countries, the fight against environmental crime, asset freezes, extrajudicial cooperation, the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and combating money-laundering are all measures that should be coordinated and implemented at the national, regional and international levels. Because we recognize that imperative, Gabon has become the fifth African country to establish a criminal intelligence analysis centre in cooperation with INTERPOL. The mechanism enables countries to adopt proactive strategies to counter organized crime and strengthen investigative and intervention mechanisms. It also responds to the challenges that analysts and investigators face daily, including in identifying criminal networks and determining the patterns and structures of gangs, among other things. Besides that, Gabon's national agency for national parks is actively countering illicit trafficking in mining products and in wildlife and oil in protected areas, and we have established a defence and security task force to enhance security on our coasts in the light of the threat of piracy at sea.

In that context, together with Germany and the Group of Friends on Illicit Wildlife Trafficking, Gabon sponsored General Assembly resolution 77/325, on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife to bolster efforts against an international scourge that is a threat to species and ecosystems and undermines our collective efforts to protect biodiversity. The biennial resolution recognizes illicit trafficking in wildlife as a type of transnational organized crime that poses an immediate threat not just to ecosystems but to security, the rule of law and good governance.

We must intensify our efforts to counter organized transnational trafficking, including terrorism financing. It is clear that in the light of the proven links between terrorism financing and organized crime, from which terrorist organizations profit via illicit trafficking of various kinds, the international

community must maintain and step up its efforts to counter such trafficking throughout supply chains. That is why my country reiterates its support for the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in monitoring the proper implementation of existing tools, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime, the Palermo Convention, and in carrying out capacity-building initiatives in highly fragile States. The partnership with UNODC must be maintained, including with regard to the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy to combat both violent extremism and drug trafficking. It will be crucial for the Security Council to address the root causes of organized crime with greater resolve, including by choking off the financing of armed groups and organized criminal networks, which creates instability and violence in many parts of the world.

I would like to conclude by underscoring the need to shore up coordination and cooperation among States and enhance interregional partnerships, including strengthening cooperation among the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I want to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for presiding over today's meeting, and the Ecuadorian presidency for bringing this salient topic to the Security Council for discussion. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his remarks, as well as Executive Director Waly, Ms. Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura for their valuable briefings.

Transnational organized crime has historically helped to create perfect conditions for conflict, both fuelling and financing situations of insecurity across the globe. It upends stability in all areas of life, disproportionately affecting women and girls, limiting ecological protections and negatively affecting development. Overall, it remains a significant obstacle to achieving the New Agenda for Peace. Novel efforts, including regional or bilateral early-warning mechanisms such as the one established between Ecuador and Colombia earlier this year, can help combat transnational organized crime and address the risks to those who are most affected. The United Arab Emirates believes that the international community can build on those efforts and effect a meaningful breakthrough in this pattern. In that regard, we would like to share three recommendations today.

First, we must confront the illicit financial flows and proceeds of crimes linked to transnational organized crime. That is as much a challenge for stable economies as it is for those that are vulnerable to shocks. The proceeds of crime are used not only to prop up criminal networks — as much as 2.7 per cent of global gross domestic product is reportedly laundered by criminals — but also in the engagement of criminal activities. The cost of bribery, for example, is estimated at as much as \$2 trillion per year. That challenge is one that the United Arab Emirates is tackling head on through strong institutions such as the financial intelligence unit. In the past few years we have increased the number of bilateral mutual legal assistance treaties that we have with Member States to 45, and that number will continue to grow.

Secondly, organized crime is multifaceted, and so too should be our approach, including by operating with a gender-responsive lens. Women and girls have unique vulnerabilities to organized crime. They are trafficked at a higher rate than men, making up 65 per cent of victims globally, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has found that they suffer extreme violence at three times the rate compared with their male counterparts. Yet women should not merely be seen as victims. Ms. Nyanjura's powerful testimony today speaks to the crucial role that women should have in educating about such issues as well as in preventing and countering crimes. We must work to increase the representation of women at all levels, including at the management and command-and-control levels in criminal justice and law-enforcement entities. Their full, equal and meaningful participation in addressing organized crime is critical not only to adopting survivor-centred approaches but to strengthening education programmes and engaging communities.

Thirdly, we must leverage new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), in our pursuit of a world free of transnational organized crime. We are increasingly seeing emerging technologies weaponized for criminal purposes. The use of cryptocurrencies alone by transnational criminal organizations grew by 80 per cent between 2020 and 2021. But the disruptive capability of technological progress cuts both ways. The United Arab Emirates believes we ought to be optimistic realists when it comes to emerging technologies, not just in assessing the threats they pose but in harnessing the opportunities they offer. AI can be used to track criminal activities online and monitor and identify suspicious and illicit financial transactions. To that

end, in August of this year the United Arab Emirates signed a private-sector partnership to establish a global centre for AI and cybertechnology in Dubai to fight cybercrime and secure the digital ecosystem.

The UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform is another example. It is a new, multi-source system that will collect, visualize and share near-real-time data on drug-trafficking trends. It is our hope that the proliferation of projects such as these will mean that they will no longer be the exception but swiftly become the rule in the fight against organized crime.

From 2015 to 2021, organized crime was responsible for as many deaths annually as all armed conflicts combined. As the primary custodians of international peace and security, we must heed the warning of that shocking statistic. It is essential that the international community meet its commitments under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to counter such crimes being committed on land, in the air and at sea, including by enhancing our international cooperation in criminal matters. Only then will we succeed in building more crime-resilient, stable and peaceful societies.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also want to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his remarks, as well as Executive Director Waly, Ms. Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura for their efforts to strengthen the Security Council's understanding of transnational organized crime. I thank Ms. Nyanjura in particular for sharing her personal tragedy with us. Her remarks were extremely moving.

We all have an interest in countering transnational organized crime, which stops neither at national boundaries nor at vast expanses of land, sea or cyberspace to exact its very high cost to individuals, to communities, to countries and even to our planet. The United States takes a comprehensive approach to countering transnational organized crime in its many insidious forms, from illicit drug and firearm trafficking, human trafficking and migrant smuggling to cybercrime, money laundering and other illicit activities.

In 2021, President Biden established the United States Council on Transnational Organized Crime, bringing together the resources to modernize and expand our ability to target transnational criminal organizations. In addition, the White House strategy

to combat transnational organized crime, which is forthcoming, will lay out our whole-of-Government strategic approach to combating that growing security threat. In July 2023, Secretary Blinken launched the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats to expand international cooperation to address synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, and to disrupt the global illicit supply chain and the financial networks that enable the illicit manufacture and trafficking of synthetic drugs and their precursor chemicals.

Existing treaties, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and international instruments and protocols provide a useful framework to facilitate law enforcement cooperation on combating crime. The United States welcomed the focus on access to justice at this year's session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and we welcome the agenda of the fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, focused on new, emerging and evolving forms of transnational organized crime.

As we respond to transnational organized crime, we must ensure that the essential voices of those affected, including civil society, are foremost in our efforts. Like many threats to peace and security, the impacts of organized crime are often acutely felt by women and girls. We encourage the relevant United Nations entities to continue to support women's safety and meaningful participation in forging lasting solutions to those challenges.

The United States recognizes the impact of transnational crime on fragile and climate-vulnerable contexts. Transnational organized criminals take advantage of fragility to advance their operations, including illicit drug trading, environmental exploitation and human and wildlife trafficking. We are eager to engage in the evolving and continued discussions surrounding nature crimes, including those crimes that impair the resilience of natural ecosystems to withstand climate change.

Finally, the United States recognizes the complex challenges posed by transnational criminal organizations to maritime security, including the trafficking of illicit drugs and their chemical precursors, migrant smuggling, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the illicit transport of weapons of mass destruction.

The United States looks forward to hearing from other countries about how they are addressing

transnational organized crime. We will continue to work with the United Nations, organizations such as the Financial Action Task Force, the Group of Seven's Roma-Lyon Group and the Global Counterterrorism Forum, and countries around the world to address those challenges.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): I thank Ecuador for organizing this open debate and I thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Melani Cammett and Ms. Victoria Nyanjura for their insightful briefings.

States are primarily responsible for the fight against transnational organized crime. It is therefore up to national authorities to address this issue through their domestic criminal justice systems, with the assistance of the international cooperation mechanisms already in place.

The Security Council must follow its mandate, which is strictly limited to maintaining international peace and security, according to the Charter of the United Nations. We are witnessing how difficult it sometimes is for the Council to fulfil its mandate. Domestic law and international and regional conventions provide the appropriate and legitimate tools to address organized crime. In the past years, we have witnessed attempts to expand the Council's interpretation of what constitutes a threat to peace and security. The encroachment by the Security Council on issues that have been traditionally dealt with in other forums may not only be in disagreement with the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, but may also have unintended consequences, including by reducing the international community's capacity to address such issues.

The fight against transnational organized crime demands a cooperative and coordinated approach. Brazil is a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and a strong supporter of INTERPOL. In the same spirit, last month a treaty was signed in Brasília to create the Police Community of the Americas (AMERIPOL) — a mechanism for cooperation and exchange of information between the police and law enforcement authorities of the Americas.

Brazil is strongly committed to promoting international cooperation to counter transnational organized crime through well-established mechanisms and forums. In order to strengthen law enforcement and judicial systems at the national, regional and international levels, those forums should be valued and

reinforced. We support the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant entities in their efforts to promote international cooperation. Such efforts, aimed at enhancing national law enforcement capacities, are crucial for reducing the gaps through which organized crime grows.

Transnational organized crime poses a threat to the fabric of our societies. In its many forms, criminal groups engage in a wide range of illicit activities that may weaken institutions and State authority, fuelling violence, corruption and deepening structural inequalities. Repressive measures and law enforcement alone do not offer enough tools to respond to those challenges.

In the elaboration of their policies to counter organized criminal groups, States should adopt comprehensive approaches that are aimed at tackling the root causes of criminal activities, such as socioeconomic disparities. Ensuring respect for human rights must be at the core of any such strategy. In that vein, Brazil reaffirms its commitment to a multidimensional response to the challenges posed by transnational organized crime.

Moreover, there is a need to focus on the movement of money that fuels organized criminal activities. In Brazil, policies devised to counter transnational organized crime give high priority to combating money laundering, addressing corruption and disrupting criminal networks.

Brazil remains concerned by attempts to associate transnational organized crime with terrorism, as there are no automatic or intrinsic linkages between those two phenomena. The relationship between them may and actually does arise under specific circumstances, but it is not universal. Despite the importance of combating both, it is clear that they are different problems requiring different remedies. Aiming for distinct goals, terrorist groups and criminal organizations usually operate through their own methods. While terrorism is fuelled by political and ideological considerations, transnational organized crime is motivated by the expectation of financial gain.

Finally, let me reiterate that Brazil remains committed to its international obligations and stands ready to continue to work in close collaboration with our partners to combat transnational organized crime in the appropriate forums and through the appropriate mechanisms.

Ms. Gatt (Malta) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ecuador for organizing this open debate on transnational organized crime and for giving visibility to that important issue.

(*spoke in English*)

I also thank the briefers, Ms. Waly, Ms. Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura, for their very insightful inputs this morning.

Transnational organized crime poses many increasingly significant challenges that have a negative impact on every State. Criminal networks operating across borders are quick to capitalize on opportunities created by instability. Such conditions may prolong conflict and hinder efforts to build and sustain peace. Ms. Waly, of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), highlighted that in Security Council meetings on Haiti earlier this year (see S/PV.9311 and S/PV.9449), noting that the flows of illicit firearms and drugs into Haiti are compounding the country's insecurity and violence. Unfortunately there are many more such cases throughout the world. For that reason, Malta reaffirms the importance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in combating both existing and emerging forms of such crime.

As an island State, Malta is especially aware of the challenges and difficulties posed by maritime crime and trafficking at sea. Arms and drug trafficking, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings are among the most serious and worrisome threats we see. Transnational criminal groups, which in some cases are closely linked to terrorist groups, are constantly evolving their modus operandi, both off- and online. Transnational organized crime must be tackled by addressing the specificities of each form of crime. We must also address the structures behind them, their profits and the technologies used to facilitate and commit the crimes. Within the European Union (EU), we are stepping up efforts through the EU's strategy on transnational organized crime to initiate actions that boost cross-border cooperation and tackle high-priority crimes and criminal networks.

This threat also affects our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition to operating in the shadows, organized crime groups use their illegal proceedings to infiltrate the licit economy and public institutions, including through corruption and erosion of the rule of law, human rights

and democracy. Criminal networks undermine people's right to safety and their trust in public authorities. That leads to instability and conflict.

More can be done by the Council to assist United Nations members in combating such crimes while safeguarding the delicate balance between security and freedom, efficiency and safeguarding human rights. In that regard, we must confront the underlying causes of transnational organized crime, which are complex. They include multidimensional factors such as widespread poverty, inadequate access to public services, security threats and deficiencies in the rule of law. Climate change and other environmental threats are also significant factors that deserve the Council's attention. Organized crime groups take advantage of such vulnerabilities all too often and portray criminal activities as the only means of survival. Our response must also be multidimensional. The approach of the UNODC and other United Nations bodies in that regard is commendable.

While we welcome all institution-building efforts, we also note the importance of tailored activities such as the UNODC Network of Women in Law and Policy against Organized Crime in West and Central Africa. We commend the recent launch by the UNODC and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children of the Joint Strategy to End Violence against Children. The Strategy includes the building of more effective mechanisms to detect, target and remove child-sexual-abuse material from the Internet and to ensure the protection of children on the move who face higher risks of crime and exploitation.

In conclusion, it is only by adopting comprehensive, holistic and inclusive solutions to address the underlying causes, grounded in human rights, that we can sustainably address this international problem. There is no time to waste.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Ecuador's convening of today's meeting and thank Secretary-General Guterres and Executive Director Waly for their statements. I also listened attentively to the briefings by Ms. Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura.

As we speak, the interlinkages between transnational organized crimes, and the complexity and sophistication of the means of committing such crimes, continue to evolve and intersect with terrorism, resulting in ever-expanding destructive spillover

effects. The international community should take that very seriously by upholding the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, enhancing solidarity and coordination and working together to combat transnational organized crime and safeguard common security.

First, specialized platforms and entities should play a major role. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Over the past two decades, with ever-growing effect and authority, the Convention has become a major platform for the international community to respond to the threat of transnational crime. Countries make use of the Convention to strengthen international cooperation in combating transnational crime. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other specialized agencies have made positive contributions to the fight against transnational organized crime. China appreciates that, and we hope that UNODC and Interpol will continue to leverage their expertise and strengthen their cooperation with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee in support of Member States' efforts in that regard. The Security Council should fulfil its role in coordinating responses to the nexus of terrorism and transnational organized crime to prevent them from colluding and penetrating each other, which threatens international peace and security.

Secondly, law-enforcement and judicial cooperation between countries should be strengthened. The emergence of new technologies has led to greater sophistication and evasiveness in many areas of transnational crime, including telecommunications fraud, online gambling and the use of underground banks. Multilateral and bilateral efforts are required to solidify cooperation networks and bring full force to bear on transnational organized crime by depriving it of breathing space. In addition to making use of multilateral platforms, countries should enhance bilateral coordination in combating individual cases of transnational crime by sharing evidence and intelligence and providing extradition and mutual legal assistance in order to jointly pursue fugitives and recover illegal assets, leaving criminals and their assets nowhere to hide. Countries concerned should respond positively to other countries' requests for judicial cooperation in fighting crime and should not use pretexts that allow their territories to become safe havens for criminals.

Thirdly, support for capacity-building in developing countries should be strengthened. Only when countries have put in place professional, efficient and robust law enforcement can they effectively deter criminal activities. While respecting the ownership of Member States, the United Nations and its relevant agencies and international partners should assist them, especially developing countries, in strengthening their law-enforcement capabilities and capacity-building in border control, customs, counter-narcotics and judicial mechanisms, among other areas. They should also help to train more law-enforcement personnel in those countries in order to improve their security and governance capabilities. In recent years, China has actively supported the UNODC and other agencies through the China-United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund to help developing countries improve their law-enforcement capabilities. China will continue to provide assistance to the best of its ability to countries in need.

Fourthly, we should sever all domestic links to transnational crime. Transnational organized crime does not serve the interests of any country. Every country should effectively shoulder its due responsibility and obligation to combat such crime. We cannot have double standards on the issue, nor can we see it as a problem only for others while being blind to our own responsibilities.

A certain country with many problems, such as drugs, gun violence and human trafficking, has chosen — rather than engaging in serious self-reflection and working to tackle the root causes — to ignore the facts and to slander and smear other countries, an attitude that is in no way responsible or constructive and that will not help to resolve the issues. The rampant gang violence in Haiti is closely linked to an influx of weapons from outside. All countries, especially those in the region, should work to implement the relevant Council resolutions effectively, suppress the trafficking and smuggling of firearms and cut off the sources of gang crimes in Haiti, which will help to create conditions conducive to resolving the country's problems.

China has been a major player in, a true practitioner of, and an active contributor to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We have fought all organized criminal activities rigorously and resolutely and have actively engaged in cross-border cooperation in combating telecommunications fraud, for example. China has stepped up exchanges and cooperation with

UNODC and INTERPOL, among other entities, and has worked regional countries in the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa group, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other frameworks to fight transnational organized crime at a regional level, with ongoing and positive results. We will continue to actively implement President Xi's Global Security Initiative, working with all parties to respond effectively to our complex and intertwined security challenges and to strive for lasting peace worldwide.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I would like to start by thanking Ecuador for organizing this open debate, which helps us to better understand the risks and threats that transnational organized crime poses to international peace and security. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura for their briefings.

As you pointed out in your concept note (S/2023/933, annex), Mr. President, transnational organized crime can take many forms and is constantly evolving, which makes it even more difficult for authorities to track and fight. In such complicated and changing circumstances, transnational organized crime and related threats to international peace and security cannot be addressed in isolation. We must be able to fight transnational organized crime effectively at the national, regional and international levels, at the same time. To that end, we believe the following steps are crucial.

First, we must expand our strategic and operational capabilities by strengthening international and regional law-enforcement networks and partnerships with the aim of improving our preventive capacities. Secondly, we must prioritize and leverage the comparative advantages of the various relevant actors, including the United Nations, INTERPOL, national law-enforcement agencies, customs and border-control agencies, anti-corruption agencies and regional and subregional organizations. We must end the fragmented approach that we have been taking up to now. Thirdly, we must fully implement the international instruments and conventions on transnational organized crime and related issues, with a particular focus on the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols and the Convention against Corruption. Fourthly, we must support the establishment and functioning of joint task forces and coordination mechanisms for sharing information and intelligence and conducting joint investigations.

We support the Secretary-General's efforts to build a more responsive and resourceful United Nations approach to fighting transnational organized crime. We strongly believe that strategies and actions aimed at addressing transnational organized crime not only require a comprehensive and coordinated approach if they are to succeed, but they must also include both countering and preventive measures. Here at the United Nations, the Security Council should do more to promote information-sharing, capacity-building and the implementation of measures countering money-laundering and terrorism financing. We should also recognize the linkage that exists in some cases between transnational organized crime and terrorist groups. In that context, the Council should work more closely with other United Nations entities and consider the development of mechanisms for tracking and reporting instances of transnational organized crime activities that also lead to sanctions violations. When we discuss and explore ways to address transnational organized crime, we should take an all-of-society approach and pay particular attention to the youth, peace and security agenda, women and girls and their access to justice and the role of civil society. In that context, we welcomed the thematic focus on access to justice at this year's Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

We will continue to work with the United Nations and all relevant actors to address those challenges, keeping in mind that our common efforts to address transnational organized crime at the regional and international levels will fall short if we fail to address it at the national level. In that regard, among other reforms, strengthening the justice system has been one of the Government of Albania's priorities since 2015, including the creation of a special prosecution and court for combating corruption and organized crime, which is already delivering results.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that Albania remains fully committed to fighting transnational organized crime at every level.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the delegation of Ecuador for convening today's Security Council meeting. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General, António Guterres, for his informative statement on such an important issue. We would also like to thank Executive Director Waly of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for her interesting

briefing. We have also taken note of Ms. Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura's statements.

The Russian Federation has consistently advocated for intensifying international efforts to counter transnational organized crime. Given its particular mandate, the Security Council should view the threat of organized crime through the lens of its link with terrorism. In 2019 the Council adopted resolution 2482 (2019), expressing concern about the fact that terrorists are able to benefit from transnational organized crime through financing or the provision of logistical support to their operations. The resolution also emphasized the importance of coordinating international efforts to respond to that challenge.

Our delegation firmly believes that the relevant international cooperation should be carried out in good faith, without hidden agendas or double standards and based on the principles of equality and mutual respect. That approach is key to the effectiveness of collective efforts to curb these problems, which are a threat to all of us. The fact that those principles are ignored by some States, including certain members of the Council, in the furtherance of their political interests, can lead to the creation of new hotbeds of tension and expand the geography of terrorist threats and organized crime. Concerted efforts on the part of the international community aimed at countering the linkage between terrorism and transnational organized crime should be carried out under the central coordinating role of the United Nations and in compliance with international law. We are committed to developing mutually beneficial cooperation in this area through regional organizations, in particular the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa group, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

States have a central role to play in the fight against terrorism and transnational crime, and strengthening States and enhancing their law-enforcement capabilities are vital elements in combating such threats. We recommend that States make more active use of the potential and expertise of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and UNODC in providing technical assistance for improving the effectiveness of countering the links between terrorism and organized crime at the national level. We also call on States to actively engage with the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate to host assessment visits and follow the Committee's recommendations, many of which are directly related to improving

the implementation of provisions on countering the connections between terrorism and organized crime.

In the fight against transnational crime, we attach great importance to the activities of key universal anti-crime structures, namely, the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We highly value the efforts of UNODC, which has vast experience in State capacity-building in countering crime.

The Russian Federation is open to constructive cooperation in resolving global tasks related to the eradication of any manifestations of crime, including its nexus with terrorism. We call on all States to adopt a serious approach to this issue, first and foremost, by delivering diligent responses to relevant requests from foreign law enforcement agencies.

Intergovernmental cooperation in countering terrorism and organized crime simply cannot be effective against the backdrop of the ongoing politicization of certain aspects by certain countries. That is particularly true when it comes to mechanisms for mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and extradition. We note an increased number of refusals to fulfil requests from law enforcement officers for legal assistance for purely political reasons.

Such actions undermine the multilateral and multifaceted nature of countering crime under the auspices of the United Nations, and they convey a clear signal about the willingness of certain States to pursue their parochial agendas, even when that is fraught with risks of openly playing into the hands of international criminal syndicates.

The activities of criminals are becoming increasingly high-tech and aggressive every year and the manifestations of transnational organized crime are being adjusted to shifting economic, scientific, technical and geopolitical realities. As opportunities grow, so do criminal proceeds, which are then redirected, among other things, to provide financial support for terrorist structures.

We condemn actions that encourage the illicit trafficking of weapons, especially small arms and light weapons. The blatantly reckless approach of a number of States to this issue results in a wide range of weapons — not only light weapons — falls into the hands of terrorists and criminal groups. A clear

example of that is the situation in Haiti, which is largely exacerbated due to the insufficient efforts of certain regional players to curb the flow of small arms and light weapons in the context of the arms embargo imposed against that State.

The uncontrolled spread of weapons supplied by the West to Ukraine poses no less a threat. It is no secret that a significant share of those weapons enters the black market, falling into the hands of terrorist and criminal groups. And it surfaces — not only in Europe, but also in the Middle East, Africa and even Latin America. The opportunity to discuss this problem in detail will present itself on 11 December, during a Security Council meeting that we will initiate.

In that context, we are convinced of the importance of all States Members of the United Nations taking effective legislative and other measures to prevent weapons from falling into the hands of terrorist and other criminal organizations. Since 2021, a Russian initiative and UNOCT strategy to combat weapons-fuelled terrorism has been successfully implemented. At the initial stage, it was focused on building the relevant capabilities of Central Asian countries. The next phase involves providing assistance to African States.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that we trust that today's adoption in the Security Council of presidential statement S/PRST/2023/6, on the threats posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime, will help to enhance international cooperation in this area.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for calling this valuable open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General and our thought-provoking speakers this morning.

The United Kingdom agrees with the Secretary-General that we can deepen cooperation to tackle the complex threat of transnational organized crime and find global solutions to it. The United Kingdom is pleased to be working with the Ecuadorian Government and with many other Governments across the world in those efforts.

I would like to stress three points.

First, as we have heard, the impact of organized crime globally is significant. Organized criminal networks are exacerbating conflict, instability and the negative effect of climate change around the globe — taking advantage of geopolitical, economic

and technological shifts. Organized crime, corruption and illicit financing drain resources and undermine societies. And online threats, including cybercrime, fraud and new technologies such as artificial intelligence, are exacerbating those risks.

Secondly, without the security that comes from effectively tackling transnational organized crime, economic development, State-building and poverty reduction is not really possible. Crime and gender considerations should be incorporated into development and security approaches. Traditional law enforcement should be combined with wider efforts to address the drivers of crime, such as poor governance or poverty; the enablers of crime, such as illicit financing or corruption; and the harms that crime produces, including by protecting victims and returning assets.

The United Kingdom is committed to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). We funded the development of a UNODC Organized Crime Strategy Toolkit to help Member States develop their own national organized crime strategies, and we are pleased that many countries are using the Toolkit.

Finally, we welcome the efforts by the United Nations and other organizations to adapt to the escalating challenges and to better coordinate with wider security, development and economic work, including alongside the private sector and civil society. I think that the Council and the wider United Nations can provide further leadership on that and support its acceleration.

The United Kingdom fully supports both the women and peace and security and the youth, peace and security agendas to help build community resilience and reduce recruitment into organized crime groups.

In conclusion, we thank you, Mr. President, for this debate, and we remain committed to working together to fight and prevent transnational organized crime.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres, Executive Director Waly, Professor Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura for their remarks.

As we heard, organized crime feeds on violence. It is a harmful cycle that often transcends borders. It

undermines the efforts of national Governments and of the Security Council to promote peace and security.

The Security Council itself has recognized that. The Geneva-based Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime has done the math — in almost half of its 2022 resolutions, the Council made reference to organized crime and illicit markets.

But organized crime and the violence it engenders are not inevitable. It is up to us, as political leaders, to deprive this harmful weed of its breeding ground. It is harmful because violence sows fear in societies and erodes their confidence in the capacity of institutions. It is harmful because violence undermines young people's prospects and increases inequalities between social strata and genders. It is harmful because its criminal structures and patriarchal models of governance reinforce one another and promote sexual and gender-based violence, as evidenced by today's briefings.

That leads us to the following conclusion — we must rely on civil society and the gender perspective to devise relevant risk assessments and targeted responses to organized crime. What other choice can we make to break the cycle of violence engendered by transnational crime?

Indeed, it all starts with one fundamental choice: to make prevention — the concept at the heart of the New Agenda for Peace — a political priority, as the immediate task is to contain the spread of organized crime. But at the same time, we need to eradicate its roots.

Prevention means building the confidence of societies in their institutions, strengthening the democratic framework and the rule of law, respecting human rights without fail — online and offline — and enabling all members of society to become agents of change. Among the latter, women who are often the essential pillars of a resilient community.

Switzerland has opted for prevention. That is why we support, for example, the Nigerian non-governmental organization Women Aid Collective, which is committed to preventing human trafficking and involves traditional and religious leaders, as well as social media influencers.

This is also why, at the international level, Switzerland founded, together with Brazil and Sierra Leone, the Pathfinders initiative to promote peaceful and open societies, in line with the Sustainable

Development Goals. Within that framework, my country is committed, alongside 45 other countries, to halving global violence by 2030. To achieve that, we are also relying on scientific research. In 2023, the Pathfinders carried out three national studies on the cost of violence, including one on Switzerland. Such an analysis enables us to identify context-specific measures for effectively preventing and reducing violence.

Ultimately, all our choices and decisions will determine whether organized crime will spread or whether sustainable development and peace will prevail. Each country is invited to make a greater commitment to prevention by adopting a national strategy on the matter. To monitor the implementation of national efforts, the international community can use the review mechanism of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Within the framework of that Convention, each member State is invited to opt for cooperation, with its neighbouring States and within the United Nations, to counter organized crime in the long term. Transnational challenges call for a multilateral response.

Finally, choosing prevention and sustainable peace means placing human rights at the heart of our national and multilateral efforts. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized during the open debate under the Swiss presidency in May: “respect for human rights is the basis of trust in our fight against threats to peace and security”.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a key opportunity to unite behind that common starting point, as the best antidote to organized crime and violence is a free and dignified life for everyone. Let us make that choice and let us make it now.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in France*): Transnational organized crime is a growing threat to our societies, to public order in our States and to international peace and security. It is spreading across all continents, weakening the governance and stability of States and fuelling conflicts.

The profits from illegal trafficking also fuel terrorist networks. To combat terrorism effectively, we must commit ourselves to combating its sources of financing, in particular cross-border trafficking.

The proliferation of conflict contributes to the increase in transnational organized crime. The lack of effective control by certain States over their

territories and borders encourages the development of criminal networks and illegal trafficking. Organized crime, which is fuelled by trafficking in arms, drugs, cultural objects, human beings and migrants, as well as environmental crime and cybercrime, must be combated everywhere in a coordinated way. We need to strengthen the development of shared, comprehensive approaches. Those threats do not end at State borders.

France therefore attaches paramount importance to full compliance with existing international conventions. I am thinking in particular of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the conventions on countering drugs, the framework established by the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Many other United Nations bodies participate in those efforts, such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). I would like to pay tribute to the work of the UNODC in supporting States in the fight against organized crime.

France believes that the Security Council should remain seized of the matter, in particular with regard to the missions that the Council mandates and the measures it takes to combat arms trafficking to non-State actors. In that respect, we welcome the recent decision to strengthen measures targeting criminal gangs in Haiti under resolution 2700 (2023).

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the need to combat new forms of crime. I am thinking in particular of the rise in cybercrime, which can undermine the functioning of our economies and societies, as illustrated by the cyberattacks that affected Costa Rica in 2022.

Finally, I am thinking of the growing threat posed by environmental crime, which is the third most lucrative illicit activity in the world. The predatory actions of criminal networks pose unacceptable dangers not only to biodiversity and the survival of our ecosystems but also to our health, prosperity and collective security. Those groups enrich themselves, by depriving States and populations of the financial benefits linked to the legal exploitation of their national resources, and fuel the financing of criminal and even terrorist networks and, therefore, must be combated.

France is resolutely committed to strengthening shared efforts against the illegal trafficking and exploitation of wildlife, timber, hazardous and other waste, chemical substances, minerals and all activities that threaten marine flora and fauna. We are promoting a comprehensive definition that takes into account all those illegal activities, as well as related types of organized crime. We will continue to raise the issue in multilateral and United Nations forums.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I highly appreciate your initiative, Mr. President, to organize this meeting on this timely and important topic. I also thank the Secretary-General, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Waly, Professor Cammett and Ms. Nyanjura for their briefings.

The world has witnessed a series of changes surrounding transnational organized crime. Widespread use of the Internet and new technologies have resulted in expanding the abuse of cyberspace for the purpose of organized crime and emerging threats such as crimes utilizing and targeting crypto assets.

We need to further strengthen capacity-building in countries, especially those with vulnerable governance, as it affects the security not just of those countries but also of regions and of the international community as a whole. Therefore, the Council needs to address that issue, and Japan welcomes the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2023/6.

Japan has been a strong supporter, with the international community, of the fight against organized crime from the perspectives of respect for fundamental human rights and the promotion of the rule of law.

In Hiroshima in May, Japan, together with the leaders of many countries, reaffirmed its strong commitment to tackle transnational organized crime, including trafficking in drugs and persons. Also, Japan is actively involved in the discussions of other multilateral frameworks, such as the Group of 20 and the Global Coalition Against Synthetic Drug Threats, which reaffirm the importance of addressing international organized crime, including corruption and drugs.

Japan has been contributing to the fight against transnational organized crime through the promotion of the free and open international order based on the rule of law. Specific examples include projects to support the capacity-building of criminal justice and law enforcement officials.

Japan has been working with international organizations such as UNODC and INTERPOL to strengthen law enforcement capacity, including human resources development, in developing countries. In that regard, I would also like to highlight the importance of the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which marks its twentieth anniversary this year.

Japan continues to actively contribute to the reinforcement of the rule of law in the international community. We will also contribute to ongoing negotiations on future legal instruments, such as a new United Nations convention on cybercrime, wherein we play a role as Vice-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. As part of those efforts, Japan plans to invite judges from South-East Asian countries in February 2024 to participate in a training course on handling terrorism trials, to be held in Malta. In that way, Japan is committed to continuing to promote the rule of law in South-East Asia and beyond.

Japan has allocated approximately \$17 million as part of the supplementary budget just approved by the Diet last week to the measures against such phenomena as cybercrime, drugs and trafficking in persons, as well as capacity-building for customs authorities of countries in need. Japan has also considerably increased the amount of its contribution to UNODC from the previous year.

In conclusion, Japan is determined to strengthen our partnership and to work together with the international community to address the issue of transnational organized crime.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

Mr. Búcaro Flores (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala thanks Ecuador, in its capacity as President of the Security Council during the month of December, for convening this open debate on the theme “Transnational organized crime, growing challenges

and new threats to international peace and security". This is an issue that poses a significant challenge at the global level.

My delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr. Daniel Noboa Azín, President of Ecuador, who presided over this open debate earlier. We also appreciate the briefings delivered by the invited speakers, who provided updated information on the impact, scope and nature of organized crime and its relationship with threats to international peace and security.

Guatemala recognizes that the challenges posed by transnational organized crime require a coordinated response at the international level, as well as the implementation of comprehensive measures and commitment on the part of the various actors to confront this complex challenge that evolves rapidly and manifests itself in various forms and activities.

Organized crime has a direct relationship with many of today's social challenges, including inequality, armed conflicts, political instability, climate change, unregulated technology and financial markets, corruption and forced migration. However, due to its intrinsically clandestine nature, little is often known about how the dynamics of organized crime operate in each country, and even less about its impact at a transnational level. Understanding how organized crime behaves, changes and adapts is crucial for all of us to understand so as to provide a meaningful global response.

Guatemala has repeatedly stated that terrorism is a global phenomenon that must be addressed from its own origins. All States are vulnerable to terrorist acts, since they represent a serious threat to international peace and security, undermine the rule of law and create political instability, impeding the economic and social development of our populations.

Due to its geographical position in Central America, we in Guatemala are today committed to work to combat transnational networks that promote crime in all its forms. Despite the enormous efforts that my country has made, we continue to be victimized by international networks that overwhelm our capabilities, as they not only possess high-calibre weapons and other war materials but have inexhaustible financial power, which increases their criminal behaviour.

The increase in the production of small arms and light weapons and their respective ammunition and their diversion from legal channels to illegal

channels and unauthorized recipients continues to be an increasingly complex problem for all of us. The diversion of weapons contributes to the empowerment of criminal organizations in areas such as drug activity and to the existence of organized crime itself, thereby threatening the protection of people and hindering the creation of an environment for the promotion of human, economic and sustainable development.

Guatemala expresses its concern about the fact that terrorists can benefit from international organized crime. We underscore that it is necessary to strengthen international, regional and subregional cooperation to prevent and effectively combat terrorism, in particular by increasing the national capacity of States by providing technical assistance based on the needs and priorities identified by the requesting States.

It is worrisome that criminal groups operate beyond national borders, taking advantage of gaps in international cooperation and challenging the ability of States to effectively address those threats. Some of the challenges and new threats associated with transnational organized crime include drug trafficking — as one of the best-known activities — human trafficking, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and other forms of gender violence, trafficking in firearms and ammunition and the exploitation of resources, illegal mining and trafficking in precious metals and minerals, trafficking in cultural goods, money laundering and so forth.

In conclusion, we must address these challenges that threaten international peace and security. It is crucial to strengthen cooperation between countries, improve law enforcement capacity and develop comprehensive strategies that include preventive, repressive and rehabilitative measures. Coordination between Government agencies as well as collaboration with the private sector and international organizations are, and will continue to be, essential so that we can together effectively confront transnational organized crime.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Štucin (Slovenia): I would like to thank Ecuador for organizing today's debate, and the briefers for their insightful briefings.

Organized crime often thrives in conflict situations, capitalizing on the absence of effective law enforcement and exploiting the vulnerabilities of weak or non-functional State institutions. Consequently,

the presence of organized criminal activities has the potential to undermine stability and the rule of law, thereby deepening and prolonging conflicts.

It has been 20 years since the Palermo Convention was adopted. Together with its Protocols and international drug control instruments, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and instruments against terrorism remain the cornerstone in our fight against transnational organized crime. But organized crime still continues to persist as a major threat to peace and security, while traditional ways of preventing and combating it are being challenged as never before. In that respect, I would like to make the following points.

First, the interconnected nature of transnational organized crime represents a significant threat to international peace and security. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach, along with strengthened international cooperation. Drug trafficking continues to be one of the most profitable income-generating opportunities for organized criminal groups. We need to focus on strengthening cooperation, especially with regard to addressing transnational organized crime pertaining to drugs and trafficking in human beings. Prioritizing, preventing and combating trafficking needs a comprehensive approach, including supporting and assisting victims, fighting the root causes and supporting countries of origin in developing appropriate anti-trafficking legislation. We believe that enhanced collaboration among Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations is crucial in tackling the cross-border dimensions of organized crime.

Secondly, we must do more to prevent crimes before they occur. I firmly believe that empowering our children and youth to become free and resilient individuals is a key strategy in combating various criminal activities. To achieve that, prioritizing prevention and early intervention programmes that enhance social and emotional competencies is of paramount importance. Ensuring increased accessibility to such initiatives for vulnerable groups is crucial, with a specific focus on strengthening support for children and their families. Following a Slovenian resolution on early prevention, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has developed the so-called CHAMPS programme to enhance children's resilience against drug use, which we strongly support.

Finally, allow me to raise Slovenia's concern over the long-lasting effects of transnational environmental

crime. The illegal exploitation of natural resources leads to corruptive practices, human rights violations, tensions over the distribution of natural resources and an increased threat for violent conflict. But the impacts of illegal trade also lead to deforestation, pollution, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, and they therefore further affect climate and the food and water security of local communities. New types of environmental crime related to water management are of particular concern to us. As an example of good practice, Slovenia's criminal code recognizes environmental damage, waste and hazardous-substances disposal, illegal handling of protected wild animal and plant species and pollution of drinking water as a criminal offence.

Addressing the root causes of transnational organized crime is of crucial importance. Slovenia advocates for a holistic approach that includes tackling social and economic inequalities and promoting inclusive development and gender equality. Such approaches have to be human rights- and gender-based, as criminal activities significantly affect women and their safety. By addressing these issues, we can contribute to preventing the emergence and growth of criminal networks.

Significant progress has been achieved in countering transnational organized crime in the past 20 years. Now is the time to use all the experience and knowledge we have gathered and upgrade current approaches to effectively counter modern, continuously changing forms of transnational organized crime.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ecuador for convening this important debate.

I begin by underlining once again the importance of recognizing that transnational organized crime manifests itself in different forms and intensities in different regions of the world. That is why Mexico calls on the international community and on the Security Council to be prudent and not establish an automatic link between transnational organized crime and terrorist and violent extremist groups. Those are two phenomena that have their own legal frameworks and forums to address them within the Organization.

Although it is true that radicalized groups and individuals are sometimes financed through

transnational criminal activities, their structures and goals are different. Organized criminal groups seek financial gain, while terrorist and violent extremist groups have ideological or political motivations. Treating those issues as one could lead to an erroneous perspective, and consequently to failed strategies. Ignoring the nuances and linking terrorism to organized crime could lead to the stigmatization of the communities or regions in which organized crime operates.

An effective strategy requires a differentiated approach that recognizes and adapts to specific dynamics and contexts, thereby ensuring a more precise and effective response. Insisting on mixing both topics, without recognizing the distinctions, nuances and particularities of each one, only leads to the magnification of the link that exists between these two phenomena, without being able to give an adequate response.

On the American continent, including the Caribbean, we cannot ignore the link that exists between illicit drug trafficking and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons — weapons that pose a significant threat to law enforcement entities.

To confront transnational threats, including drug trafficking, human trafficking and the illegal exploitation of natural resources, it is essential to stop illicit financial flows and the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The inability to put a stop to that has been one of the causes that has led organized criminal groups to increase their capacity for action and thereby increase violence and insecurity. It is necessary for States to deepen the use of financial intelligence and legal processes such as assets forfeiture to affect the patrimonial and financial structure of organized criminal groups.

It is equally important to combat corruption, and crucial to implement the Organization's anti-corruption convention signed in my country, Mexico, in 2003.

In relation to drug trafficking, we are convinced that we can only effectively address the problem through a combination of prevention and action that puts the individual at the centre of our public policies, including prevention efforts among young people, manufacturing and trafficking, but also including attention to the problem of distribution in large consumer markets, markets where the large profits from this illicit market are generated.

The Government of Mexico participates in this debate with the firm conviction that the entire international community must address the structural causes of violence and crime through a comprehensive and complementary approach between policies that address crime prevention and criminal justice and those that seek to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions, namely, the economic, social and environmental.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Morocco welcomes the holding of this very important Security Council debate under Ecuador's presidency. We welcome the presence here this morning of His Excellency the President of Ecuador, which raised the tenure of our debate. Morocco thanks the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the other briefers for their informative interventions.

In the course of the past two decades, the universalization of the Palermo Convention made tremendous progress with the ratification by 192 States parties, including Morocco. The Convention has not just engendered a movement of legislative convergence throughout the world, but it has also consolidated a normative basis at the bilateral and regional levels with regard to judicial and police cooperation, while providing a solid foundation for strengthening capacities. Nevertheless, two observations warrant our attention.

The first concerns transnational organized and its ability to adapt. Criminal networks evolve, even as we mobilize, in order to evade detection. It maliciously takes advantage of improved mobility, the expansion of international trade and developments in information and communications technology.

The second is that cross-border organized crime is becoming globalized, even as it enhances its regional roots. In many parts of the world, links among conflict, trafficking and organized crime are almost systematic in nature. We condemn the proven links in Africa among criminal, terrorist and separatist groups.

Morocco also believes that combating transnational organized crime requires, first, strengthening the rule of law; secondly, law enforcement capacity-building; thirdly, ensuring that the capacities of public institutions to counter corruption are enhanced; fourthly, expanding

the good offices of UNODC and its regional offices to better promote coordination and cooperation among Member States, specifically when it comes to the exchange of good information and best practices; and fifthly, promoting security-level cooperation to tackle transnational challenges posed by crime.

Morocco plays a leading role in regional and international efforts to prevent and combat crime in all its manifestations and to establish criminal justice based on respect and enforcement of international norms. In that regard, allow me to focus on the following four elements.

First, the Kingdom of Morocco attaches the highest priority to combating terrorism and has worked to put in place national, regional and international policies to counter this scourge and its financing, via an approach based on cooperation and the exchange of information, experience and best practices. That has resulted in foiling a number of terrorism attempts in many countries, thanks to cooperation with Morocco.

Secondly, the Kingdom of Morocco devotes crucial importance to countering corruption, in particular through the operationalization of legal mechanisms to counter that phenomenon and criminalize it in all its forms and through strict enforcement of the law for perpetrators. Morocco has ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption.

Thirdly, Morocco has made it a national priority to prevent and counter the use and trafficking of drugs and psychotropic substances at the international and national level by adopting a comprehensive, multidimensional and integrated strategy. This has been widely welcomed by the international community and competent United Nations bodies.

Fourthly, the Kingdom of Morocco is tireless in its efforts to counter human trafficking, including through the establishment of a national action plan for 2023–2026 and a national strategy for 2023–2030. These national efforts are currently geared towards the establishment of a national reference mechanism to establish protection systems for victims.

The Kingdom of Morocco was elected, during the 91st INTERPOL General Assembly, held recently in Vienna, to host the 93rd General Assembly of Interpol, to be held in 2025 in Marrakech. This reflects the respect, trust and appreciation which the Kingdom of Morocco and its security institutions enjoy, under the

enlightened leadership of His Majesty Mohammed VI. In the same vein, Morocco is currently hosting, in Tangier, the 47th conference of Arab police and security leaders. This is an opportunity to discuss, among others, the use of modern technologies in countering terrorism, violent extremism, cybercrime and transnational organized crime.

To conclude, my delegation underscores the need to shore up the collective efforts of the international community, in order to better promote the establishment of international and regional security based on mutual respect, good neighbourly relations and effective and active cooperation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile would like to thank Ecuador for having convened this open debate, and we take note of the briefings and contributions that we have heard. We wish Ecuador every success during its presidency of the Council this month.

There can be no doubt that transnational organized crime is one of the most serious problems that the international community is facing today and a substantial threat to international peace and security, which undoubtedly affects women and girls to a disproportionate degree. We believe that the current international model of organized crime has three fundamental characteristics, compared to its previous incarnations: it is operational at the global level, it has extensive transnational links, and, above all, it has the capacity to challenge national and international authority. Given that global context, in order to fight transnational organized crime, we need to have more and better international cooperation and enhanced commitment from multilateral and regional entities. That would facilitate the effective exchange of information for prevention and for the prosecution of those who participate in these criminal activities and would strengthen the control and detection capacities at the borders.

Another concern that must be addressed is that the criminal groups involved in organized crime very often must reinvest their earnings by purchasing property and goods in order to hide their illicit origins — this is known as money laundering — which entails significant risks for the financial systems of the countries involved and complicates criminal investigations being carried

out by the prosecuting authorities. In addition, such income can then be channelled towards extraregional entities to fund terrorism.

Corruption can be considered as a foundational crime for transnational organized crime, as to a greater or lesser extent, it is a part of all crimes associated with that phenomenon — from the payment of hush money to public officials, bribery and influence peddling, to facilitating the laundering of ill-gotten gains, or even obtaining classified information. We are aware that the crimes and level of violence associated with this have such an impact that they not only give rise to concern and fear in the population and claim lives, but also cause doubts regarding the legitimacy and effectiveness of democracy, the State and its institutions.

For Latin America, and our country in particular, transnational organized crime is an ongoing concern, as it is strongly linked to drug trafficking. Other criminal activities include arms trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling and illicit trafficking in migrants. These actions have an overwhelming impact on the public safety of countries in the region and undermine human development, governance and democracy.

We would like to take this opportunity to once again recall the upheaval that this phenomenon has caused in Haiti. There is data that supports the view that terrorism has robust links to organized crime, precisely because drug trafficking represents such an important source of financing. I would like to briefly refer to the international cooperation programme between Latin America and the European Union, known as the Europe-Latin America Assistance Programme against Transnational Organized Crime, which seeks to contribute to security and justice in Latin America through the support of the European Union to fighting transnational organized crime. The programme led to the establishment of the Latin American Committee for Internal Security, which seeks to combine the efforts of Latin American countries, coordinate our work, articulate security policies and define joint strategies to combat organized crime. It is a crucial forum for high-level dialogue between Latin America and the European Union when it comes to security. We note that next year, Ecuador will be the chair of the Committee. Of course, we would like to take this opportunity to wish Ecuador every success in the work to be carried out and to pledge that they can count on the support of my country in that.

In conclusion, allow me to share with you the efforts of my country, Chile, in this area, and bear witness to the importance that this has for our rule of law. In December 2022, the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security of Chile launched the first national policy against organized crime, a coordinated effort that proactively brings together 17 public institutions that play a leading role in fighting crime. Its central goal is to break up criminal gangs and organizations and weaken their financial and economic power. Specifically, it aims to update the standards for prosecuting this crime, the capacity of the police and the tools available to institutions working in the area of security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Denmark.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries — Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

We thank Ecuador for convening this open debate as well as our briefers today for their important interventions.

Transnational organized crime and the political economy of conflict are closely linked. Opportunities for criminal enrichment often spur the onset of the resumption of hostilities, frequently over illicit drugs or natural resources. Even when that is not the case, conflicts attract criminal actors. Conflict actors need money and resources to sustain their ability to fight. Criminal activity provides that. Moreover, criminal actors are often based in neighbouring countries, thus regionalizing conflicts and spreading their destabilizing effects across borders. We must curb transnational organized crime, both in the conflict zones and beyond.

We, the Nordic countries, take this opportunity to highlight two key issues that should guide the multilateral approach.

First, because transnational organized crime in conflict is a question of political economy, the response should be tailored accordingly. It must be comprehensive, and due consideration should be given to diplomatic, development, justice, anti-corruption and security measures. To tailor the response, the international community needs to know more about the transnational criminal networks and how to contribute to the spread of terrorism and fuelling of conflict dynamics. On this note we commend the work of the panels of experts and monitoring teams for relevant

United Nations sanctions regimes for their valuable contributions. We would like to see this international oversight strengthened. Furthermore, we encourage improved coordination and enhanced partnership between all United Nations entities, preferably to an even more effective United Nations interagency task force on policing.

That said, local voices are often best situated to identify criminal networks and illicit trade flows, and they should be included in the work to hold criminal criminals accountable. Activists and civil society groups can inform and support efforts to tackle the impact of crime on conflict. Those are brave individuals who put themselves at risk in order to call out and combat criminal activity. Their protection must be ensured.

Our second point is that the approach to transnational organized crime must be guided by the core United Nations values of human rights, good governance and the rule of law. The majority of the victims of both crime and conflict are civilians who are extorted, trafficked, kidnapped and become casualties in the fighting over the exploits of criminal activity. In addition, many low-level actors in transnational organized crime never wanted to be criminals; poverty drives some of them to make unsociable choices, others are pressured, some at gun-point, to participate in criminal activity. Our approach to transnational organized crime should distinguish between crime as subsistence and crime as a means to sustain conflict. We must provide economic development to offer better livelihood alternatives, in addition to improving governance and law enforcement.

In conclusion, we must take a comprehensive and multilateral approach to transnational organized crimes and its causes and effects on international peace and security. We must enhance the work of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Policing. Those who speak up should be supported and protected. And finally, we can tackle the root causes only if we remain true to our values, ensure economic development and strengthen the rule of law.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Van Schalkwyk (South Africa): South Africa would like to thank Ecuador for convening this important open debate on the challenges posed by transnational organized crime to international peace and security. We also appreciate the insightful briefings on global trends concerning transnational criminal

networks and the role of transnational organized crime in sustaining armed conflict, terrorism and corruption and compromising the rule of law.

The cross-cutting nature of transnational organized crime fuelled by, among other things, illicit drug trafficking, human trafficking, illicit financial flows, cybercrime and terrorism presents a major threat to the international community, with devastating social and economic implications. This position is amplified in the 2023 report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) within the framework of the world crime trends and emerging issues and responses in the fields of crime prevention and criminal justice, with a focus on homicide, human trafficking and the solicitation of bribes.

There is broad recognition that, in some situations, transnational organized crime perpetuates armed conflicts and terrorism through illicit arms trafficking and the channelling of illicit proceeds of crime to terrorists and non-State armed actors. That is evident from the 2023 UNODC transnational organized crime threat assessment in the Sahel, which shows that transnational organized crime can provide a source of funding and logistical assistance to terrorist groups. For that reason, South Africa supports calls for enhancing regional, subregional and international cooperation with a view to accelerating the implementation of our international commitments in line with the primary responsibility of Member States to build and maintain peace and security.

We also stand ready to work with other Member States towards the identification of trends and addressing the gaps in effectively preventing and countering challenges posed by transnational organized crime and its links to fuelling terrorism and the destabilization of peace and security throughout the world.

The rise in illegal mining activities, perpetrated by both local and cross-border criminal syndicates, brings with it various other secondary offences, such as human trafficking and the funding of gang wars. Equally, gang wars have resurfaced in the area of wildlife crimes, such as rhino poaching and certain other species of wild flora and fauna. In that regard, South Africa appreciates the support of the UNODC Regional Office for Southern Africa and the technical assistance and capacity-building provided through the various training and research programmes that inform the development of policies and legislation aimed at curbing this scourge.

In conclusion, while it is prudent to pay particular attention to the linkages between transnational organized crime and terrorism, including eroding peace and stability, we encourage Member States to curb the scourge in a holistic manner that entails eradicating any form of cooperation, coexistence and convergence among those criminal groups as well as dismantling criminal networks. We are convinced that those efforts will make a meaningful contribution towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which commits us to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Massari (Italy): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this very important and timely meeting.

Italy has always attached the greatest importance to international cooperation in the fight against transnational organized crime, and this year is no different. We strongly support the omnibus crime draft resolution (A/C.3/78/L.8/Rev.1) of the General Assembly, which reaffirms the centrality of the United Nations programme on crime prevention and criminal justice, including its capacity for technical cooperation. The Third Committee adopted the draft resolution by consensus, and it has been co-sponsored by 85 Member States. The draft resolution builds on last year's text (General Assembly resolution 77/237) and takes stock of new developments in the field of multilateral cooperation, including those related to the substantial results achieved by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna and, in particular, the five draft resolutions that will be adopted by the General Assembly within a few days. We also welcome the fact that the text of the draft resolution includes new language that strengthens the role of youth crime prevention policies, the protection of the environment and the importance of effectively combating the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse of children. Those elements should be considered the new frontier in the fight against such crimes. We are also

pleased that the text under consideration strengthens the role of UNODC in the implementation of its mandate under the draft resolution on important issues such as access to legal aid, anti-corruption measures, crime prevention and technical assistance policies related to youth and counter-terrorism.

With regard to the questions raised in the concept note (S/2023/933, annex), Italy would like to stress the importance of police and judicial cooperation. It is crystal clear that organized crime always has a transnational dimension and that an effective fight against it should hinge on two elements: first, legal instruments that streamline cooperation and guarantee the admissibility in national proceedings of evidence gathered abroad; and secondly, the creation of specialized units capable of using state-of-the-art instruments to detect and investigate organized criminal groups. In that context, I would like to emphasize the importance of joint investigation teams, whose support is crucial when parallel proceedings relating to the same crime are ongoing. The legal basis for that instrument is article 19 of the Palermo Convention. At the regional level, however, other binding agreements provide for the potential setup of joint investigation teams as well.

Finally, allow me to mention that we are celebrating an anniversary these days: the Palermo Convention entered into force 20 years ago and is still considered the most effective international legal tool in combating organized crime. We need to continue to work for its full implementation, as well as the full and effective implementation of its Protocols, especially those concerning the trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. We believe that further ratifications and accessions to the Protocols should be encouraged and supported, as these heinous crimes require an ever-increasing international response and crackdown.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at noon.