General Assembly

**Asia and Pacific Regional Preparatory
Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations
Congress on Crime Prevention and
Criminal Justice**
Bangkok, 21–23 January 2025

Draft report

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Addendum

II. Recommendations (*continued*)

B. Substantive items and workshops – Agenda item 5 (c)

1.   An introductory presentation was delivered by a representative of the Secretariat. Statements were made by the representatives of the Russian Federation, Thailand, Indonesia, France, United States of America, Australia, Japan, the Philippines, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. A statement was also made by the observer for the World Bank – International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Another statement was delivered by the observer for the Thai Institute of Justice. Statements were also made by the observers for the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

3.   **Addressing and countering crime – including organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations – in new, emerging and evolving forms (agenda item 5); and getting ahead: strengthening data collection and analysis to better protect people and planet in times of new, emerging and evolving forms of crime (workshop 3);**

Summary of deliberations

2.   Speakers observed with concern that evolving threats of transnational organized crime, corruption, and terrorism, threaten the security and economic interests of Member States. Linkages between terrorism and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in firearms and drugs, were highlighted.

3.   Speakers underlined that terrorist methods continue to evolve, with groups becoming increasingly interconnected, noting for example that terrorist groups that were previously in competition are now working together. In addition, it was noted that foreign terrorist fighters continued to join and combat alongside with

international terrorist groups. A people-centred, and comprehensive anti-terrorism approach, building resilience of communities, with a focus on children associated with terrorist groups, which led to a significant decrease of attacks was provided as a good practice example to be replicated. Concern was raised about online radicalization and the need to increase capacity-building of law enforcement officials to counter this crime, in particular when committed through the misuse of information and communications technology systems, was stressed.

4.   In addition, emphasis was placed on the importance of countering the financing of terrorism, as some speakers stressed the evolution in mobilizing resources, with an increasing use of cryptocurrencies, fundraising through social media platforms as well as transfer of funds between regions through online financial platforms. Wide dissemination of research methodology and analysis on this particular issue was provided as a good practice to identify terrorism financing trends globally. An increased focus on detecting and disrupting financing networks through increased international cooperation was recommended as an effective step towards dismantling terrorist networks. Some speakers expressed support for the language on return of confiscated assets, as contained in UNCAC and UNTOC, and encouraged the further development of inter-agency networks on asset recovery. A speaker recommended to refer to the Kyoto declaration in relation to asset recovery.

5.   The importance of gender mainstreaming in the development and the implementation of counter-terrorism policies, which should also be in line with human rights standards, was also noted.

6.   Noting the linkages between new, emerging forms of crime and corruption, reference was made to the primacy of the United Nations Convention against Corruption to combat this crime, and the importance of its Implementation Review Mechanism underlined.

7.   The importance of UNTOC to combat new, emerging and evolving forms of crime was underscored by speakers, who encouraged Member States to participate more in its Review Mechanism as a way to gather data on crime and foster international cooperation.

8.   Speakers expressed concern about the rise of crimes that affect the environment in the Asia-Pacific region, such as illegal fishing, illegal mining, and illegal deforestation, and called for comprehensive measures. It was said that crimes that affect the environment, particularly the illicit exploitation of natural resources, such as illegal logging as well as wildlife trafficking, had evolved into highly sophisticated organized criminal enterprises providing large profits, and requiring stronger international cooperation. Reference was made to the lack of regulation of some specific forms of crimes that affect the environment, such as waste product management, and the need to give more attention to the crime of illegal fishing and illegal deforestation. Speakers observed that more analysis and exchange of data to better understand these issues were needed, while noting in this regard the establishment of a group of experts pursuant to a resolution adopted by the twelfth session UNTOC Conference of the Parties in October 2024, that will meet for the first time in June 2025.

9.   Reference was made to illicit mining having implications for global supply chains and enriching transnational criminals and to multinational corporations often exploiting natural resources to be held accountable, through, for example, the establishment of stronger international legal frameworks and mechanisms. The establishment of networks of specialized law enforcement agencies and prosecutors was mentioned as a solution to better combat crimes that affect the environment.

10.   In the field of cybercrime, speakers raised concerns about the increasing use of the digital world for criminal purposes, including frauds, scams as well as online child sexual abuse material. It was noted that criminals used ICTs and generative AI in particular to their benefit, for example for automation, hacking or to erase traces. The

recent adoption of the Convention against Cybercrime was welcomed by speakers, and the instrument was seen as a helpful tool to help address the challenges, since it established a mechanism within the United Nations to strengthen the cooperation of law enforcement agencies in the digital sphere as well as the exchange of electronic evidence. Speakers encouraged a speedy signature and ratification of the Convention for a prompt entry into force following the ceremony of signature in Viet Nam. The need to apply of human rights safeguards in the implementation of the Convention was stressed by speakers.

11.   Speakers stressed the need to protect the rights of women and children in the digital sphere, including against online child sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as non-consensual sharing of intimate images or image-based sexual abuse, which could be more effectively achieved through stronger international cooperation. The need for strengthening partnerships with tech companies to prevent and combat online child sexual abuse and the creation of AI-generated child sexual abuse material, was underlined.

12.   To effectively utilize new technological tools and solutions, speakers supported the promotion of tailor-made technical assistance and capacity-building programmes aimed at enhancing the expertise and capabilities of law enforcement and criminal justice authorities, such as for example digital forensic training, including through support provided by UNODC. The establishment of regional training centres against cybercrime, the deployment of cyber experts in foreign law enforcement institutions as well as the establishment of specialized cybercrime units connected to all departments, including prosecution were noted as good practices. The need for new regulations and infrastructure was also mentioned.

13.   Speakers noted with concern that online fraud and scams constituted a particularly rapidly growing emerging form of organized crime in the region and beyond, committed against numerous victims globally, with significant sums stolen.

14.   Linkages between fraud and trafficking in persons were mentioned by speakers who noted with concern a large increase in the detection of trafficking in persons for forced criminality to commit online scams and fraud.

15.   These crimes, among others, constituted new threats to communities, calling for increased cooperation, including through the use of mutual legal assistance and extradition requests. In addition, the value of informal networks and cooperation among law enforcement agencies and investigators was underlined as an agile and critical way to respond. Further, strong partnerships with academia, media and other civil society organizations working against organized crime were highlighted as essential to help fight such crimes, noting the need for a united approach.

16.   Emphasis was put on the need to make trafficking policies gender- and child-responsive as well as informed by people with lived experience and reference was made to incorporation of the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking into domestic legal frameworks, including for victims trafficked for forced criminality in online scam compounds. The Blue Heart Campaign was mentioned as being useful to mobilize support for these victims and the organizations that support them.

17.   The relevance of combating the smuggling of migrants was stressed and the fight against migrant smuggling at sea in particular being referred to.

18.   Speakers referred to the production and consumption of drugs as a global threat that was rising due to the emergence of synthetic drugs, further recommending a balanced approach in full compliance with the three international drug control conventions. Effective international cooperation against drug trafficking was underscored as crucial, while making sure to adhere to international human rights standards.

19. Speakers underlined that robust and accessible, as well as gender-disaggregated data, are necessary to address new challenges and support the work of law enforcement agencies, thereby encouraging the development of innovative approaches to data collection. A good example of information-sharing in real time to detect crimes that affect the environment was described, that could be replicated. Reference was also made to effective data collection being essential to improve the integrity, accountability and oversight of criminal justice institutions, noting the value of key performance indicators.

Outcome of deliberations

20. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:

(a) With terrorist groups increasingly using new technologies, such as cryptocurrencies for their financing, and taking into account the growing linkages between terrorism and organized crime, undertake research on new forms and manifestations of terrorism, including online, and strengthen national investigative capabilities to respond to these new threats;

(b) Strengthen international collaboration and promote innovative solutions to identify, monitor, and disrupt terrorist financing networks. Promote international data-sharing and capacity-building initiatives to equip law enforcement agencies with the necessary tools and expertise to counter the evolving tactics of terrorist groups effectively;

(c) Support research on the role of emerging technologies in asset recovery and in countering terrorism financing effectively and encourage the development of inter-agency networks on asset recovery;

(d) Strengthen domestic capabilities to counter crimes that affect the environment and deepen international cooperation to respond when these crimes become transnational in scope.

(e) Establish stronger international legal frameworks and mechanisms to hold multinational corporations accountable in cases of crimes that affect the environment;

(f) Sign and ratify as soon as possible the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime, which will constitute an effective tool and the necessary legal framework for international cooperation in preventing and combating cybercrime and in ensuring the timely and lawful collection and sharing of evidence in electronic form for a broad range of crimes that may be committed through the use of information and communications technology systems;

(g) Strengthen collaboration with online platforms to prevent the distribution of illegal content;

(h) Request online platforms to notify supervisory and law enforcement agencies of data indicating serious crimes, including sexual exploitation of children;

(i) Identify best practices to prevent, disrupt, and prosecute new and evolving crimes, including online frauds and scams and highlight opportunities for greater international coordination and the provision of technical assistance to counter these major threats to the region;

(j) Adopt and strengthen efficient solutions to combat the crime of online frauds and its linkages to trafficking in persons for forced criminality relating to online scams and fraud. In this regard, strengthen efforts to prevent and counter trafficking in persons for forced criminality to commit online scams and fraud, and protect victims, while upholding the principle of non-punishment;

(k) To address the rise in illicit drug trafficking, including synthetic drugs, to ensure adherence to the three international drug control conventions and increase

international cooperation to counter clandestine labs, new psychoactive substances and designer precursors, and to facilitate international scheduling;

(l) Improve and enhance the collection, quality, availability, and analysis of data regarding the impacts of different forms of crimes, and in particular, strengthen statistics and data collection with a view to identify perpetrators' hot spots in relation to child sexual abuse;

(m) Take decisive actions through legal frameworks, public awareness campaigns, and robust mechanisms to hold perpetrators of hate crimes, including those targeting individuals on the basis of religion or xenophobia, accountable.

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