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Western Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

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Draft report

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Addendum

II. Recommendations (*continued*)

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

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)

1. An introductory presentation was delivered on the agenda item by a representative of the Secretariat. Statements were made by the representatives of the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Egypt and Qatar.
2. A statement was made by the observer for Canada.
3. Statements were also made by the observers for the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime and the Alliance of NGOs Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Summary of deliberations

4. During the debate on agenda item 5(c), many speakers addressed the growing linkages between organized crime, terrorism and other forms of serious crime. Several speakers highlighted the importance of adopting comprehensive and holistic approaches to counter interconnected threats, noting that terrorist groups increasingly engage in various criminal activities including trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, money-laundering, and trafficking in illicit firearms. They emphasized that these phenomena could not be addressed in isolation and required integrated responses.
5. Several speakers underscored the significance of crimes against the environment as an emerging challenge, with a speaker indicating that annual proceeds from such



crimes amount to approximately 300 billion US dollars, with the risk that they be used to fund terrorist and criminal activities. Some speakers described specific initiatives involving international partners such as UNODC, INTERPOL, EUROPOL, and GCC-POL to strengthen coordination and capacity-building in combating crime that affect the environment. Linkages between routes used to commit crimes against the environment and pathways for other forms of illicit trafficking were highlighted by some speakers.

6. Many speakers highlighted the importance of addressing illicit trafficking in cultural property as an emerging form of crime that generates substantial revenues and may fund terrorism and other criminal activities. Several speakers noted the limitations of existing international conventions in providing adequate protection for cultural artifacts, especially in the field of criminal law. Special investigative techniques, such as controlled delivery, as well as tools like INTERPOL's database for stolen artifacts, were mentioned as effective means to combat this form of crime.

7. Several speakers addressed challenges posed by digital technologies and cybercrime in relation to organized crime and terrorism. The adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention on Cybercrime in December 2024 was noted as an important step toward addressing challenges faced by criminal justice systems in this field. Some speakers emphasized the need to strengthen regulatory mechanisms regarding online content, particularly concerning the sexual exploitation of children. The balance between freedom of expression and content moderation responsibilities was discussed by several speakers, who noted the importance of creating a safe cyber environment, particularly for protecting vulnerable groups such as women and children.

8. Some speakers highlighted challenges related to trafficking in synthetic drugs and links to organized crime and terrorism. The need to support the role of mandated international bodies and to strengthen international and regional cooperation to counter this evolving phenomenon was emphasized by some speakers, who also noted connections with money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

9. Several speakers underscored the role of artificial intelligence and cryptocurrencies as emerging challenges in combating organized crime and terrorism. The responsible use of artificial intelligence while respecting human rights and privacy was emphasized, with a speaker noting the need for human supervision in artificial intelligence operations. Challenges posed by cryptocurrencies in tracking criminal activity, combating money-laundering, and recovering proceeds of crime were also highlighted.

10. Many speakers emphasized the importance of data collection and analysis in developing effective responses to emerging forms of crime. The lack of accurate data, particularly regarding the nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime, was identified as a key challenge by some speakers. The need to strengthen research capacity and facilitate access to data was emphasized, with some speakers suggesting the establishment of national and regional centres to track criminal networks and adopt relevant policies.

11. Several speakers addressed the importance of following financial flows and depriving criminals of proceeds of crime as key strategies in combating organized crime and terrorism. The role of financial intelligence units in tracking illicit financial flows and the importance of linking financial intelligence to other forms of intelligence were emphasized by some speakers. The need to strengthen mechanisms for asset confiscation and recovery and compensation for victims was also mentioned.

12. Some speakers highlighted the importance of enhanced implementation of existing international instruments, particularly UNTOC, to make full use of its potential including as a legal basis for international cooperation in criminal matters. Challenges in its implementation were noted, including the slow pace of the review mechanism, lack of available data and analysis and limited financial resources.

13. Several speakers underscored the importance of strengthening international and regional cooperation to counter emerging forms of crime effectively. The development of joint regional mechanisms, exchange of information and expertise, training of professionals, use of modern technologies, and coordination of international and regional efforts were mentioned as key elements of such cooperation. The role of strategic partnerships involving various stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector, was emphasized by some speakers.

14. Some speakers addressed the importance of investing in sustainable development as a pathway to countering organized crime and terrorism. The development of attractive investment environments that provide employment opportunities, particularly for youth, was mentioned as an effective approach. Some speakers highlighted the importance of assessing security along porous and fragile borders to address crime and terrorism.

15. Several speakers emphasized the importance of prison reform and rehabilitation programmes in preventing recidivism and radicalization. A speaker highlighted the need to apply the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) to ensure effective rehabilitation. The value of preventive approaches, particularly those focused on youth empowerment and involvement in crime prevention efforts, was underscored by some speakers.

16. Several speakers emphasized the importance of intelligence-led investigations and judicial processes for complex cases. The establishment of specialized bureaux for judicial research within intelligence directorates was mentioned as a successful approach, with some speakers highlighting the use of special investigative techniques, including interception of communications, for effective investigations of terrorist and organized criminal activities.

17. Some speakers underscored the relationship between corruption and other forms of crime, particularly crimes against the environment. Corruption was described by some speakers as an enabling factor or infrastructure that facilitates the perpetration of various criminal offences, including organized crime, illicit trafficking, and money-laundering.

Outcome of deliberations

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

(a) Adopt comprehensive and integrated approaches to address the growing convergence between organized crime, terrorism, and other forms of serious crime, recognizing that these phenomena cannot be effectively countered in isolation;

(b) Consider the development of a model law or guiding manual on existing countering terrorism instruments that would help Member States fully comply with such international instruments;

(c) Strengthen law enforcement capacity to combat crimes that affect the environment, including through specialized training, enhanced international cooperation, and effective use of data and technology for monitoring and detection, while addressing the relationship between corruption and these crimes;

(d) Consider the enhancement of the international legal framework for addressing illicit trafficking in cultural property, and strengthen the implementation of the Convention through increased political attention, technical assistance and capacity-building, improved financial resources for the UNTOC implementation review mechanism, and the establishment of independent research and monitoring mechanisms; establish an intergovernmental expert group under the auspices of CCPCJ following the example of the expert discussions on crimes that affect the environment held in 2022;

(e) Consider signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime adopted in December 2024 at an early stage while developing strategies to create safe cyber environments that protect vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children, and while strengthening international cooperation frameworks regarding serious criminal offenses facilitated by digital technologies;

(f) Update national drug and psychotropic substances schedules in accordance with the decisions taken by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and strengthen measures to counter the trafficking in synthetic drugs, with a focus on high-level trafficking networks;

(g) Ensure responsible use of artificial intelligence in law enforcement and criminal justice while respecting human rights and privacy, including through appropriate oversight mechanisms and human supervision of artificial intelligence operations;

(h) Establish national and regional centres to track criminal phenomena, collect and analyse data, and develop evidence-based policies to combat emerging forms of crime, while strengthening mechanisms to follow financial flows and deprive criminals of proceeds of crime; increase financial resources for research, and establish independent research and monitoring mechanisms;

(i) Develop joint regional mechanisms to enhance cooperation through improved exchange of information, coordination of efforts, and sharing of expertise and good practices, including capacity-building programmes for law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judges with particular attention to digital evidence collection;

(j) Invest in sustainable development as a pathway to countering organized crime and terrorism, including through the creation of employment opportunities, particularly for youth;

(k) Strengthen prison reform efforts and rehabilitation programmes for offenders in accordance with the Nelson Mandela Rules, with a particular focus on preventing radicalization and recidivism;

(l) Integrate intelligence capabilities within judicial processes while investigating complex cases, including through appropriate institutional frameworks and use of special investigative techniques in accordance with human rights standards.
