



BACKGROUND GUIDE



UNODC

**UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS
AND CRIME**

SMIS MUN '25

IMAGINE · INSPIRE · INNOVATE

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD



Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) simulation at SMISMUN'25. This year's agenda, "Countering Transnational Organised Crime," requires the collaborative spirit and innovative solutions of every delegate. From drug trafficking networks to cybercrime syndicates, these criminal organisations threaten global stability and undermine legitimate governments.

This committee will be simulated as the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). The UNODC designs and implements programs, delivers technical assistance to countries, and publishes reports, such as the World Drug Report. These activities do not fit the Model UN format, which centres on negotiation and drafting.

This Background Guide is designed to give you an insight into the case at hand, so we hope this acts as only a catalyst for furthering your research, and is not limited to just this guide. Please refer to it carefully. Remember, a thorough understanding of the problem is the first step to solving it.

We encourage you to engage in meaningful dialogue while maintaining decorum. We trust in your ability to build consensus and develop comprehensive strategies for effective international cooperation.

We look forward to a great session with all of you! Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions regarding the committee or the background guide.

Sincerely,

Ayush Mantri – Chairperson

Srimohini Margapuri – Vice Chairperson

COMMITTEE AND MANDATE



The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) is the principal policymaking body of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for issues surrounding crime prevention, criminal justice, and the rule of law at the international level. Established in 1992 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) via resolution 1992/22, CCPCJ focuses on strengthening criminal justice systems and fostering international cooperation to combat crime, especially transnational organised crime.

Resolution 1992/22 tasked the CCPCJ with leading international efforts to address both national and transnational crime. It called for improved international collaboration to combat criminal activities such as organised crime, economic crime, and money laundering. The resolution specifically identified the need for collective action against emerging criminal threats that cross borders and exploit global vulnerabilities.

In addition to direct crime prevention, the CCPCJ is charged with fostering the role of criminal law in protecting the environment. It recognises the growing impact of environmental degradation and the necessity of criminal justice tools to counter environmentally destructive practices.

A further pillar of the CCPCJ's mandate is the improvement of the efficiency and fairness of criminal justice systems. This includes promoting reforms that ensure justice for all individuals, supporting equitable access to justice, and facilitating the sharing of best practices among Member States.

The CCPCJ functions as the preparatory and implementing body for the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held every five years. It thus plays a direct role in shaping the global agenda and reviewing the effectiveness of collective action. The Commission also coordinates with a network of UN-affiliated research institutes, facilitating the development of evidence-based approaches and capacity-building initiatives.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



A few important points delegates should keep in mind while preparing:

Procedure: The purpose of putting in procedural rules in any committee is to ensure a more organised and efficient debate. The committee will follow the UNA-USA Rules of Procedure. Although the Executive Board shall be fairly strict with the Rules of Procedure, the discussion of the agenda will be the main priority. So, delegates are advised not to restrict their statements due to hesitation regarding the procedure.

Foreign Policy: Following the foreign policy of one's country is the most important aspect of a Model UN Conference. This is what essentially differentiates a Model UN from other debating formats. To violate one's foreign policy without adequate reason is one of the worst mistakes a delegate can make.

Role of the Executive Board: The Executive Board is appointed to facilitate debate. The committee shall decide the direction and flow of the debate. The delegates are the ones who constitute the committee and hence must be uninhibited while presenting their opinions/stances on any issue. However, the Executive Board may put forward questions and/or ask for clarifications at all points in time to further debate and test participants.



NEWS SOURCES

This Background Guide is meant solely for research purposes and must not be cited as evidence to substantiate statements made during the conference. Evidence or proof for substantiating statements made during formal debate is acceptable from the following sources:

1. Any Reuters article which clearly mentions the fact or is in contradicts the fact being stated by a delegate in the council.
2. Government Reports: These reports can be used in a similar way to the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as credible information.
3. Reports from NGOs working with UNESCO, UNICEF and other UN bodies will be accepted. Documents from international organisations like OIC, NAFTA, SAARC, BRICS, EU, ASEAN, and ICJ may also be presented as a credible source of information.

DEFINING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME



Legal framework

The primary legal framework for defining transnational organised crime is the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), also known as the Palermo Convention. It was adopted in 2000 and entered into force in 2003. The UNTOC ensures a universal applicability of the definition of “transnational organised crime” across diverse legal systems.

Under Article 2(a) of UNTOC, an “organised criminal group” is defined as “A structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit”

An offence qualifies as transnational under Article 3(2) if it meets any of the following criteria:

1. Cross-border commission: The crime is committed in more than one state.
2. Cross-border planning: The crime occurs in one state, but substantial preparation, planning, direction, or control takes place in another state.
3. Multi-state group involvement: The crime involves an organised criminal group that operates in multiple states.
4. Cross-border effects: The crime has substantial effects in another state.

DEFINING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME



Operational Characteristics

1. Transnational organised crime groups are characterised as “self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate transnationally for the purpose of obtaining power, influence, monetary and/or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means”
2. Violence and intimidation are important operational characteristics. These groups use violence in three primary directions:
 - a. Intra-group violence to maintain discipline and submission within the organisation
 - b. Inter-group violence to eliminate competition and settle disputes with rival organisations.
 - c. External violence to intimidate victims, witnesses and state officials to protect operations.
3. Systematic corruption is also a defining operational characteristic that enables criminal groups to evade law enforcement, facilitate operations and ensure impunity.

Examples of Transnational Organised Crime

1. Colombian Cartels: Operate production facilities in South America, utilise transportation networks through Central America and Mexico, and distribute products in North American and European markets. They employ violence, corruption, and sophisticated logistics to maintain operations across multiple jurisdictions

DEFINING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME



2. Eastern European Networks: Recruit victims in countries like Romania and Ukraine, transport them through transit countries, and exploit them in destination countries across Western Europe and beyond. These operations involve document fraud, corruption of border officials, and systematic violence.

MAJOR FORMS OF TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME

Human Trafficking

Article 3(a) of the Palermo Protocol states that:

‘Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

MAJOR FORMS OF TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME



Human trafficking constitutes one of the most widespread forms of Transnational organised crime, involved in global criminal networks and linked to other illicit activities such as drug trafficking, sexual exploitation, migrant smuggling, and forced labour exploitation. They are exploited across borders through intricate systems, operated by criminal organisations, exploited through legal loopholes, corrupted law enforcement and forged documents.

It's estimated that more than 200,000 persons were trafficked between 2020 and 2023, and according to the 2024 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, the number of detected trafficking victims rose by 25% in 2020 compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019. Children comprised 38% of all detected victims in 202, while women made up 61.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) addresses corruption as a facilitator for trafficking and promotes accountability within law enforcement, border control, and judicial institutions. The International Labour Organisation Convention 29 is aimed at suppressing compulsory labour in all forms and requires member states to take measures to prevent forced labour, including in trafficked persons.

The Optional Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), reinforces the protection of children exploited through trafficking.

MAJOR FORMS OF TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME



The General Assembly passed the resolution - Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (A/RES/64/293), providing a comprehensive framework to reduce human trafficking and establishing the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons to provide legal and financial aid to victims.

Drug Trafficking

While there is a normal explicit definition of “Drug Trafficking”, the 1988 Vienna Convention outlines that the production, manufacturing and transport of illicit narcotics across borders is a criminal offence under domestic law unless any other drug law is stated.

It remains one of the most profitable and common forms of transnational organised crime. Criminal organisations that focus on the illicit narcotics trade operate across continents through global network supply chains. These groups often exploit poverty and corruption to expand their operations and trade undetected, and the UNODC has estimated that drug trafficking generates profits of over \$320 billion annually.

According to the 2024 UNODC World Drug Report, global production and trafficking of illegal narcotics have surged over the past couple of years. Cocaine production has surged to 3,700 tonnes, and synthetic drug markets (especially methamphetamine) have rapidly expanded in regions like Southeast Asia. Opioid-related overdoses continued to cause high mortality rates, particularly in the United States.

MAJOR FORMS OF TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME



The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is the principal policymaking body of the United Nations on drug control issues. It supervises the implementation of the international drug conventions and sets standards on emerging drug trends, including synthetic and non-medical use of narcotics.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK



1. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC)

Adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25 on 15 November 2000, entered into force on 29 September 2003, UNTOC is the cornerstone treaty obliging States Parties to:

- Criminalise participation in an organised criminal group, money laundering, corruption and obstruction of justice
- Facilitate extradition, mutual legal assistance and law-enforcement cooperation
- Promote training, technical assistance and information-sharing.

2. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children

Opened for signature with UNTOC under resolution 55/25, entered into force 25 December 2003. Establishes the first universal, legally binding definition of “trafficking in persons,” mandates domestic criminalisation of trafficking, and requires victim protection and assistance measures.

3. Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air

Also adopted with UNTOC via resolution 55/25, effective 28 January 2004. For the first time defines “smuggling of migrants” globally, and obliges States to criminalise smuggling activities, foster international cooperation, and safeguard smuggled migrants from exploitation.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK



4. United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 39/141 on 20 December 1988; entered into force 11 November 1990. This convention:

- Criminalises illicit production, sale, transport, and possession of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; precursor diversion; and money laundering of drug proceeds.
- Mandates mutual legal assistance, extradition of offenders, controlled delivery operations, and asset seizure and forfeiture.
- Requires States Parties to monitor precursor chemicals through national control systems and to notify suspicious transactions internationally



KEY TRAFFICKING ROUTES

The Balkans

The Balkan Route is the principal overland corridor for Afghan heroin into Europe. It begins in Afghanistan, passes through Iran and Türkiye, then splits into three branches in Southeast and Western Europe. Between 2019 and 2022, an estimated 166 tons of pure heroin equivalent traversed this corridor annually, generating illicit revenues of US\$13.9 – 21.4 billion per year. Iran and Türkiye serve as major transit hubs, with traffickers in Türkiye redistributing nearly 9.6 tons of pure heroin to over 10 European destinations such as Austria, Belgium, and Germany each year.

Central Mediterranean

The Central Mediterranean Route connects North Africa (notably Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria) to Italy and Malta. In 2023, approximately 254,000 migrants departed via this route (79% more than in 2022), and UNODC estimates that smuggling services on this corridor generated between US\$290 million and US\$370 million that year. Smugglers pack migrants into unseaworthy boats, often armed with knives or firearms, and abandon them at sea. Survivors report kidnapping, forced labour, physical and sexual abuse, and extortion en route, illustrating the severe exploitation endemic to this trafficking corridor.



KEY TRAFFICKING ROUTES

Southern Route

The Southern Route is a key maritime corridor for Afghan heroin destined for South and Southeast Asia, as well as the African and European markets. Approximately 150 metric tons of Afghan opiates go via this route each year, moving first from poppy fields in Afghanistan into Pakistan, where traffickers ship refined heroin by land through Pakistan's northwest corridors and by air or sea to consumer markets in India, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, and increasingly Europe via direct shipments to the United Kingdom and Netherlands.



QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER (QARMA)

1. How can Member States enhance cross-border cooperation and management to prevent and intercept illicit trafficking?
2. What prevention strategies can be adopted to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking?
3. How can victim protection mechanisms be improved to ensure comprehensive support and legal safeguards?
4. What coordinated actions and capacity-building measures should be established to disrupt transnational organised criminal groups?
5. What policies and accountability systems can be implemented to counteract corruption in border management and law enforcement?
6. Which mechanisms and technological tools should be advanced to trace and disrupt illicit financial flows linked to criminal organisations?
7. How should emerging technologies, such as cryptocurrencies and encrypted platforms, be addressed to prevent abuse by organised crime?
8. How can partnerships with private sector entities, especially in the technology and financial industries, be developed to enhance the detection and monitoring of trafficking and suspicious activities?



PAST RESOLUTIONS

1. ECOSOC Resolution 1992/22 – <https://undocs.org/E/RES/1992/22>
2. General Assembly Resolution 55/25 (United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime) – <https://docs.un.org/A/RES/55/25>
3. General Assembly Resolution 64/293 (Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons) – <https://docs.un.org/A/RES/64/293>
4. General Assembly Resolution 75/311 (Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife) – <https://docs.un.org/A/RES/75/311>
5. CCPCJ Resolution 33/1 – https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/2020-2029/2024/2024_Res_33_1_CCPCJ.pdf

IMPORTANT LINKS

1. https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1988_en.pdf
2. <https://www.ilo.org/media/21026/download>
3. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>
4. https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/UN_Convention_Against_Corruption.pdf
5. https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/2000-2009/2009/General_Assembly/A-RES-64-293.pdf
6. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2024/GLOTIP2024_BOOK.pdf
7. https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/organized_crime/UNTOC_eng.pdf
8. https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/organized_crime/Protocol_Smuggling_2000_en.pdf
9. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CCPCJ/mandate.html>