

Topics

- Alternative development
- Corruption
- Crime prevention and criminal justice
- Drug prevention, treatment and care
- Drug trafficking
- HIV and AIDS
- Human trafficking and migrant smuggling
- Money-laundering
- Organized crime
 - Assessments
 - Conference of the Parties to the UNTOC
 - Digest of Organized Crime Cases
 - Law Enforcement
 - Witness Protection
 - Contact us
- Piracy
- Terrorism prevention
- Wildlife and forest crime

Resources

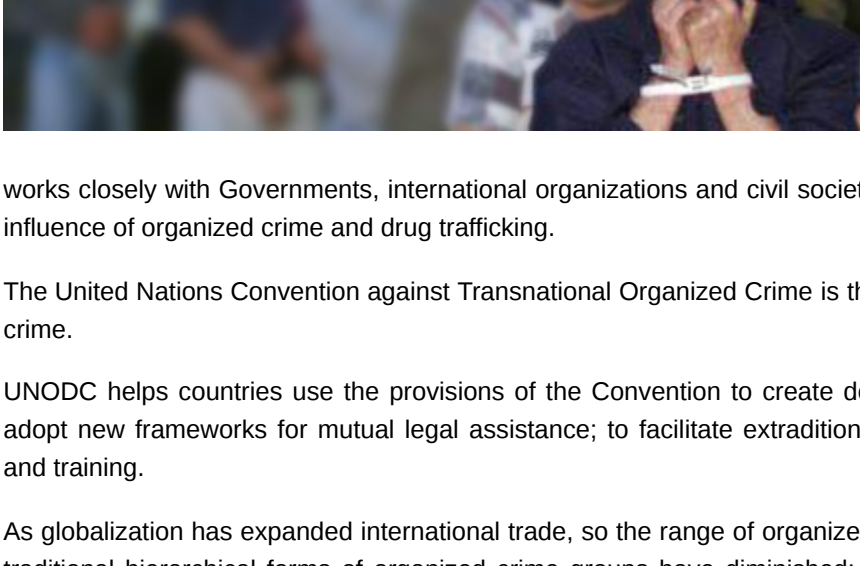
- Campaigns
- Commissions
- Crime Congress
- Data and analysis
- Laboratory and forensic science services
- Legal tools
- Treaties
- Evaluation

Information For...

- Donors
- Member States
- NGOs and civil society

UNODC and organized crime

English | Français



works closely with Governments, international organizations and civil society to strengthen cooperation to counter the pervasive influence of organized crime and drug trafficking.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is the main international instrument to counter organized crime.

UNODC helps countries use the provisions of the Convention to create domestic criminal offences to counter the problem; to adopt new frameworks for mutual legal assistance; to facilitate extradition; law enforcement cooperation; technical assistance and training.

As globalization has expanded international trade, so the range of organized crime activities has broadened and diversified. The traditional hierarchical forms of organized crime groups have diminished; replaced with loose networks who work together in order to exploit new market opportunities. For example organized crime groups involved in drug trafficking are commonly engaged in smuggling of other illegal goods. The links between drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime calls for a more integrated approach to address this nexus. The signing of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2000 was a historic step forward in countering this threat.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which entered into force in September 2003, is the main international instrument to counter organized crime. The Convention commits states to introduce a range of measures, including the creation of domestic criminal offences to counter the problem; the adoption of new frameworks for mutual legal assistance; extradition; law enforcement cooperation; technical assistance and training.

UNODC works closely with national governments, organizations and civil society to enhance international cooperation to counter the pervading influence of organized crime and drug trafficking. The Unit has initiated and oversees numerous counter-narcotics and anti-organized crime projects.

Assisting Member States in the ratification and implementation of the TOC Convention;

- Monitoring the implementation of the Convention;
- Developing and promoting best practice in countering organized crime across the globe;
- Improving the exchange of information; judicial cooperation and mutual legal assistance between law enforcement officials and;

- Determining the most effective method for collecting information on organized crime from a regional and global perspective and ensuring that such information is available to policymaking and technical assistance projects.

Protection against Trafficking in Cultural Property

In resolution 2008/23, entitled "Protection against trafficking in cultural property", the Economic and Social Council reiterated its request to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in close cooperation with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, to convene an open-ended intergovernmental expert group meeting, with interpretation in all the official languages of the United Nations, to submit to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its eighteenth session relevant recommendations on protection against trafficking in cultural property, including ways of making the model treaty for the prevention of crimes that infringe on the cultural heritage of peoples in the form of movable property more effective. It invited Member States and other donors to provide extrabudgetary contributions for those purposes. Member States are thus invited to make voluntary contributions to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime cover the costs for conference services and to enable the intergovernmental expert group meeting to be held in English, French and Spanish.

UNODC was not able to convene the intergovernmental expert group meeting due to a lack of funds and was therefore not able to submit the requested recommendations to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its eighteenth session. Instead, it will submit the recommendations requested above to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its nineteenth session when it will report on the implementation of the entire resolution.

Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Group Meeting on Protection against Trafficking in Cultural Property, Vienna, Austria, 24-26 November 2009

Technical assistance

The Anti-Organized Crime and Law Enforcement Unit assists States in taking effective, practical steps, in line with the provisions of the Convention, to fight organized crime.

An example of practical assistance to Member States is the project "Assistance to the Signatories of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its related Protocols". It provides technical assistance to support the implementation of the Convention, with key outputs to facilitate the assessment and revision of national legislation to ensure compliance with the Convention and its Protocols; strengthen the institutional and operational capacity of law enforcement and judicial bodies to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate serious crimes, including organized crime; enhance international cooperation between criminal justice practitioners; and collect, assess and disseminate best practices in combating organized crime.

UNODC has been active in the promotion of the Convention, raising awareness of Member States to their obligation under its ratification. Regional meetings have been held in Algeria for African countries, in Ecuador for Latin American and Caribbean countries, in Guatemala for Central America, in Latvia for Eastern European countries and in Japan for Asian countries. Expert group meetings to prepare legislative guides to the TOC Convention and its three protocols have also been held. National level meetings on legislative and other issues related to the ratification were held in cooperation with the Governments of Cape Verde, East Timor, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Mali, Nigeria, Romania and Indonesia.

Moreover, the Unit develops and runs specific technical assistance projects to support specialized organized crime units in a number of countries where the problems of organized crime are particularly severe or have the potential to become more serious.

Training of criminal justice practitioners

The Anti-Organized Crime and Law Enforcement Unit has developed various project initiatives aimed at training law enforcement personnel, including police investigators, prosecutors and judges, intelligence analysts and customs officials. In line with the provisions of the Convention, these projects examine best practice to counter organized crime addressing investigations, international cooperation, protection of witnesses, prevention of organized crime and anti-organized crime legislation.

Information sharing among criminal justice practitioners

UNODC is a focal point for data being gathered on transnational organized crime.

- Regional crime assessments are prepared by the Anti-Organized Crime and Law Enforcement Unit and presented on UNODC's website.
- The nature of active criminal groups across a variety of countries, with an overview of their salient features and special characteristics. This report can be downloaded by clicking on the adjacent icon.
- Ongoing information collection efforts of strategies, legislation and structures in place across the globe to counter organized crime. Detailed assessments of 20 countries have been critical in shaping training and other assistance material.

Assessing organized crime trends

Accurate information providing a detailed overview of organized crime, and state attempts to counter it, is an essential prerequisite for

designing appropriate responses, including UNODC technical assistance interventions with respect to cross-border cooperation.

Two regional assessment surveys on organized crime have been carried out by the Unit. The first covers the Central Asia region, with a particular focus on the states of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

The second covers the West Africa region, specifically Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Assessments for East Africa and South Asia are planned.

Kidnapping and organized crime

The increasing involvement of organized crime groups in kidnapping for ransom has raised serious concern to the international community. In the most severely affected countries, several hundred kidnappings are conducted each year by organized crime groups. The Anti-Organized Crime and Law Enforcement Unit has developed a United Nations Counter - Kidnap Manual to include best practices for law enforcement authorities to combat kidnapping.

The manual presents a constructive tool for policy makers, law enforcement officers and criminal justice practitioners and is aimed at providing national authorities with guidelines on how to deal with a kidnapping case in a practical and effective manner. Although legislative and national policies to target kidnapping are covered, the manual is substantively devoted to the key responses needed for success in prevention and investigation.

It was developed from a series of working groups, contributed to by a number of regional experts. The manual will be made available to Member States in all the official languages of the United Nations in early 2006.

In addition, information regulating kidnapping received from Member States can be found in a report submitted in six languages at the 12th session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

E/CN.15/2003/7	Report of the Secretary-General on measures to strengthen international cooperation in the prevention, combating and elimination of kidnapping and in providing assistance for the victims	English	French	Spanish	Russian	Arabic	Chinese
E/CN.15/2003/7/ADD.1	Report of the Secretary-General on measures to strengthen international cooperation in the prevention, combating and elimination of kidnapping and in providing assistance for the victims Addendum 1	English	French	Spanish	Russian	Arabic	Chinese

Witness Protection

Witnesses are the cornerstones of successful criminal justice systems. Protecting them from intimidation or threats against their life because of cooperation with law enforcement or judicial authorities is critical to the maintenance of the rule of law. Furthermore, witness protection programs are considered a key tool in the dismantling of organized crime networks. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (TOC Convention) calls upon state parties to take appropriate measures to protect witnesses in criminal proceedings from threats, intimidation, corruption or bodily injury, and to strengthen international cooperation in this regard.

UNODC has developed a series of tools to support Member States develop and operate special programs to support protect witnesses of crimes. They include:

1) The UNODC **"Good Practices in the Protection of Witnesses in Criminal Proceedings Involving Organized Crime"**. The good practices which were launched in February 2008 provide a comprehensive picture of available witness protection measures and offer practical options for adaptation and incorporation in the legal system, operational procedures and particular social, political and economic circumstances of UN Member States. They have been developed in a series of regional meetings with the active participation of expert representatives from law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial authorities of Member States. They reflect experience from different geographical regions and legal systems, together with existing literature, previous and ongoing work by UNODC as well as other international and regional organizations.

The good practices identified take a holistic approach to witness protection. They examine a series of measures that may be undertaken to safeguard the physical integrity of people who give testimony in criminal proceedings from threats against their life and intimidation. These measures provide for a continuum of protection starting with the early identification of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, moving through the management of witnesses by the police and enactment of measures to protect their identity during court testimony and culminating with the adoption of the exceptionally severe measures of permanent relocation and reidentification.

In the development of the good practices, UNODC consulted with more than 60 Member States and international organizations such as Europol, Eurojust, International Criminal Court, International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Interpol, SECI Regional Center for Southeast Europe, Sierra Leone Special Court as well as UNAFRI and UNICRI.

[Full text of the manual](#) (pdf). [Spanish version](#) (pdf), [Russian version](#) (pdf), [French version](#) (pdf), [Arabic version](#) (pdf).

2) UNODC has developed a **model law on witness protection for Latin American countries**. It was developed by an experts group held in Santiago, Chile with the participation of officials from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, the International Association of Prosecutors, the International Criminal Court, the Organization of American States, Panama and Peru. The model law was finalized and published in Spanish under the banner of UNODC and OAS and was launched officially in the annual conference of the Iberoamerican Association of Attorney General Offices (AIAMP) in Madrid, Spain in October 2007. It has been used already in Honduras and presented on the VI Brazilian Seminar on Victim/Witness Assistance and Protection held in Salvador de Bahia in December. In April 2008 an expert group meeting will be held to universalize the model law.

Identity-related crime

In a world where there is increased reliance on identification information in both the public and private sectors, our globalized and computerized societies are vulnerable to identity-related crime.

Our identities are increasingly defined not only by who we are, but by a series of numbers and information that is stored as a unique data set. This information is used for banking, shopping, travelling, or collecting social assistance. Increasingly it includes biometrics and DNA profiles. In the wrong hands, this information is abused to launder money, commit fraud, and enable illicit activity and travel (including terrorism, organized crime, human trafficking, and illegal migration).

In serious cases, millions of dollars are stolen using false ID. Millions of smaller cases result in personal loss and frustration for victims. Because of under reporting, lack of common definitions, and insufficient legislation, this is probably just the tip of the iceberg. Nor are the costs purely economic: identity-related theft can pose a major threat to security. The problem is serious, and it is growing. No wonder it has been called "the crime of the 21st century".

Starting with the release of a study on "Fraud and the criminal misuse and falsification of identity" in 2007 and on the basis of its mandates arising from ECOSOC resolutions 2004/26 and 2007/20, UNODC has launched a consultative platform on identity-related crime with the aim to bring together senior public sector representatives, business leaders, international and regional organizations and other stakeholders to pool experience, develop strategies, facilitate further research and agree on practical action against identity-related crime. In this context, a core group of experts was established to exchange views on the best course of action and the most appropriate initiatives that need to be pursued under the platform. The group has so far met four times in Courmayeur, Italy, on 29-30 November 2007, and in Vienna, Austria, on 2-3 June 2008, on 20-22 January 2009 and on 18-22 January 2010.

[More information:](#)

ECOSOC resolutions 2004/26, 2007/20 and 2009/22.

Study on "Fraud and the criminal misuse and falsification of identity" (pdf). (Add.1, Add.2, Add.3)

Report of the first meeting of the core group of experts on identity-related crime (Courmayeur, Italy, 29-30 November 2007) (pdf).

Report of the second meeting of the core group of experts on identity-related crime (Vienna, Austria, 2-3 June 2008) (pdf).

Report of the third meeting of the core group of experts on identity-related crime (Vienna, Austria, 20-22 January 2009) (pdf).

Report of the fourth meeting of the core group of experts on identity-related crime (Vienna, Austria, 18-22 January 2010) (pdf).

Report of the fifth meeting of the core group of experts on identity-related crime (Vienna, Austria, 6-8 December 2010) (pdf).

