



JBCN Chembur Middle School Model United Nations 2026

Delegate Study Guide

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Agenda: Addressing illicit drug production, transportation, and trafficking within the Latin American region and its effects on youth, public health, and social stability

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you all to the inaugural edition of the ***JBCN Middle School Model United Nations***, hosted from 23th to 24th January of 2026.

Welcome to the ***United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*** (UNODC). I, ***Samidha Sonkar***, Head Chair for this committee, alongside my Co-Chair, ***Zaara Thakker***, are honoured to guide you all. We are tasked with addressing a critical issue: the illicit drug trade in Latin America and its effects on youth, public health, and social stability.

This topic is complex and layered, however, we must navigate it correctly and be effective problem-solvers. The United Nations exists to foster international cooperation on the world's most difficult challenges. That is precisely what we aim to achieve in this committee.

This guide will serve as your foundational resource. It is designed to provide you with a thorough understanding of the key issues. Feel free to use it to prepare your research, formulate your country's position, and come to the conference ready for debate and action. Every delegate's contribution is vital to achieving a comprehensive solution.

I look forward to your insightful contributions, and all the very best.

Sincerely,

Chair, Samidha Sonkar
Co-Chair, Zaara Thakker

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Introduction

Committee Overview

Started in 1997, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is the UN-specific body that works to curb drugs, crime, terrorism, and corruption. The UNODC was created as a special agency within the United Nations by merging the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Center for International Crime Prevention. It is an executive body that plays a vital role in establishing its criminal justice and security within the UN system as a whole, and in assisting member states in translating their commitments into action.

UNODC's advantage is its expertise in the broad area of criminal justice system reform, in which it helps to understand organised crime, combating the global drug networks, and collaborating on other problem areas such as corruption, research, and terrorism prevention. UNODC works with many stakeholders to maximise the impact of their work. They include governments, civil society organisations, academic and research institutions, the private sector, international and regional organisations, and other UN entities. There are various inter-governmental bodies under UNODC which bring together policy makers, and experts from all over the world on the issues of drugs and crime, which include.

- Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)
- Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) • United Nations Congresses on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice • Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption

Agenda Overview

The agenda for this committee focuses on the issue of illicit drug trafficking within Latin America. Our discussions will be centred around understanding and the end goal will be proposing solutions for the illicit supply chain and its undeniable consequences. Key areas of focus will include:

- ***The Illicit Supply Chain:*** We will look into the drug trade, from the production of narcotics in source countries to the transportation networks used by criminal organizations, and the trafficking of these substances to global markets.
- ***Impact on Vulnerable Populations:*** A primary concern is the effect on youth who are often targeted for recruitment into gangs, exposed to violence, and fall victim to substance abuse.
- ***Public Health Crisis:*** The committee will address the significant public health

challenge, including the rise of addiction, the strain on healthcare systems, and the spread of deadly synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

- **Threats to Stability:** We will analyze how the drug economy leads to social and political stability through violence, corruption, and the disobedience of laws laid out by state institutions, and discuss methods to strengthen the rule of law.

Definition of Key Concepts

These are some terms that you **must** understand and research to have a better understanding of the topic at hand. We have provided a comprehensive list of some of the most important ones below.

1. **Cartel:** A criminal organization that controls the promotion and distribution of narcotic drugs.
2. **Cross-Border Trafficking:** The movement of illegal drugs, often involving multiple countries, along established smuggling routes.
3. **Drug Trafficking:** Drug trafficking, also known as illegal drug trade or narcotrafficking, is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws.
4. **Extortion:** The practice of obtaining something, especially money, through force or threats.
5. **Fentanyl:** A synthetic opioid much stronger than heroin or morphine, increasingly trafficked by organized crime groups, causing overdose spikes globally.
6. **Gang Recruitment:** The process by which cartels or gangs lure young people into participating in drug trafficking, extortion, or violent enforcement.
7. **Impunity:** The exemption or immunity from punishment or recrimination for an action.
8. **Illicit Drug Market:** A global black market dedicated to the cultivation,

manufacture, distribution, and sale of prohibited drugs.

9. ***Money Laundering:*** The concealment of the origins of illegally obtained money, typically by transfers involving foreign banks or legitimate businesses.

10. ***Narco-Terrorism:*** The use of drug trade profits to fund terrorist activities or politically motivated violence.

11. ***Opioid Crisis:*** The widespread misuse of opioid drugs, including prescription painkillers, heroin, and synthetic opioids like fentanyl, leading to a sharp rise in addiction, overdoses, and deaths.

12. ***Smuggling Route:*** A seaport, airport, or land port which has not been authorized by the government for the import and export of illegal goods. These allow criminal organizations to move drugs, weapons, and other sin goods while avoiding detection and regulation.

13. ***Synthetic Drugs:*** Artificially created substances designed to mimic the effects of existing illicit drugs, such as cannabis, cocaine, and marijuana.

14. ***Transit Hub:*** A transit hub is a key location where drugs are temporarily stored, repackaged, and redistributed along trafficking routes.

15. ***Transnational Organized Crime:*** Criminal activities that are planned and controlled by powerful groups and carried out on a large scale.

Historical Context

Drug trafficking, especially in Latin America, became a rampant issue in the late 20th century. Certain regions had the climate and geography suitable for growing plants like coca (used for cocaine), poppy plants (used for heroin) and cannabis. Rising demand led to criminal groups expanding production and transportation routes. Weak law enforcement, poverty, and corruption allowed drug networks to grow stronger over time.

The First Power Shift (1970s)

The origins of the South American cartels can be traced back to the late 1960s and early 1970s when there was a shift in the drug dynamics between Mexico, the U.S. and South America as a whole. This shift took place during this time period when the

U.S. government intensified its efforts to combat the flow of particularly marijuana flowing in from Mexico. Their efforts included stricter border controls, anti-drug campaigns, as well as further law enforcement actions. An example of their efforts was carried out in 1969 and known as "Operation Intercept," which was targeted directly at the drugs entering the U.S. from Mexico.

Colombian traffickers, who had experience smuggling other goods, saw a golden opportunity. They started with marijuana but quickly realized that cocaine was a better choice. The advantage of higher profits and easier transport combined with the lack of enforcement against South American operations in comparison to the Mexican border, facilitated Colombian cartels to scale rapidly and fill the void which had been created in the U.S. drug market. This calculated decision ignited the "cocaine boom," allowing powerful groups like the Medellín and Cali cartels to build vast empires that supplied the booming U.S. market

The Second Power Shift (1990s)

By the late 1980s, U.S. authorities had turned their full attention to Colombia's cartels, focusing on their smuggling routes in the Caribbean. This pressure pushed the drug trade back towards the land border between the U.S. and Mexico. This allowed Mexican organizations, who had once been simple transporters for the Colombians, to seize control. Additionally, this shift allowed Mexican cartels to expand their reach, as they began to play a critical role in trafficking drugs into the U.S. from South America. They leveraged their command of the land routes to become partners and, eventually, the dominant players in the trade, and grew wealthy and powerful. This major transformation of the Mexican cartels solidified their dominance in the global drug trade, surpassing the Colombian cartels that had initially pioneered the trade.

War on Drugs

The official policy driving these shifts was the U.S. "War on Drugs." It was an approach based on prohibition and military-style force. While it succeeded in taking down some infamous leaders, the policy also caused intense violence and corruption in Latin America and often just pushed the problem from one country to another, rather than solving it temporarily.

Causes & Consequences

Key Causes

1. High Demand for Illegal Drugs

A major cause of illicit drug production & trafficking is high demand for illegal them in other regions, mainly North America and Europe. This creates large profits for criminal organizations, encouraging them to expand production and trafficking networks. As long as consumers continue to purchase illegal drugs, cartels have a strong incentive to operate. This market makes it difficult to eliminate drug trafficking through enforcement alone.

2. Poverty and Limited Opportunity

Poverty and lack of economic opportunities are crucial factors. In many rural areas, farmers turn to illegal drug crops because they provide higher and faster income than legal agriculture. Similarly, young people with limited access to education and employment may be recruited into drug trafficking networks. These conditions make communities vulnerable to criminal influence and allow drug networks to grow.

3. Weak Law Enforcement and Corruption

Weak law enforcement systems and corruption allow drug trafficking organizations to operate more easily. In some regions, traffickers use bribery, threats, or violence to avoid arrest and prosecution. Limited resources and poor coordination between authorities make it difficult to control borders and dismantle criminal networks. This weakens trust in government institutions and enables illicit drug activities to continue over long periods of time.

Key Consequences

1. Harm to Youth

Illicit drug trafficking has severe effects on youth, who are often exposed to drugs at an early age. Many young people face increased risks of addiction, school dropout, and recruitment into criminal groups as the drugs slowly begin to affect them physically and mentally. Growing up in environments affected by drug violence and crime limits educational opportunities and future employment prospects. This creates a cycle where youth are both victims of and participants in the illegal drug trade.

2. Increase Violence and Instability

Drug trafficking contributes to high levels of violence and insecurity in affected regions. Competition between criminal groups for control over territory and trafficking routes often leads to armed conflict, intimidation, and civilian harm. Communities may experience fear, displacement, and a breakdown of social trust. Over time, this violence weakens social stability and makes it harder for governments to maintain peace and safety.

3. Public Healthcare Strain

The spread of illegal drugs creates public health challenges, including a spike in addiction, mental health disorders, and drug-related diseases. Healthcare systems

become strained as governments must allocate more resources to treatment & rehabilitation. Sometimes, access to proper healthcare is limited, especially in poorer communities. This demonstrates why drug trafficking must be addressed as both a criminal justice and public health issue.

Overview Of Major Cartels

While drug cartels have long been present in South America, the 1990s marked a pivotal era in which they evolved into the powerful and violent transnational criminal organizations known today. This decade witnessed a surge in the volume of marijuana and cocaine trafficked through Mexico, generating immense profits and fostering the rise of three principal Mexican cartels: the Gulf, Sinaloa, and Juárez Cartels.

Key Mexican Cartels

1. The Gulf Cartel

As the oldest and most established cartel, the Gulf Cartel, under the leadership of figures like Juan García Abrego and Osiel Cárdenas Guillén, has historically trafficked a range of narcotics including cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin. This Cartel's key characteristic is that it is both the oldest and most established cartel, notoriously known for its use of corrupt officials to facilitate their operations.

They were pivotal in moving drugs across borders and facilitating the transport of drugs from the U.S to Mexico and vice versa. A defining characteristic of this organization is its extensive use of corruption, infiltrating official channels to protect and advance its operations. Over time, they began to involve themselves in other criminal activities including extortion & smuggling.

2. The Sinaloa Cartel

Led by Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, the Sinaloa Cartel is primarily engaged in trafficking cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, and heroin. It is distinguished by its sophisticated logistical capabilities, expansive global distribution networks, and significant influence across multiple geographic territories. Current estimates place the cartel's annual revenue in a range from approximately \$3 billion to \$39 billion. Its key characteristic is that it is well-known for its sophisticated logistics, vast distribution networks and influence over multiple geographic regions.

3. The Juárez Cartel

Headed by Amado Carrillo Fuentes, also known as “El Señor de los Cielos,” the Juárez Cartel transports similar substances to its rivals. It was distinguished by its historical dominance over key drug trafficking corridors leading into the United States. After Amado’s death in 1997, the organisation passed to his brother Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, under whose leadership the cartel grew significantly and developed extensive trafficking infrastructure. However, it was best known for its control over the major drug trafficking routes into the U.S. Its main enforcement arm is a faction known as La Línea, composed of former police and military personnel, which has handled violent enforcement and territorial control. It still maintains influence in key trafficking corridors and continues smuggling operations along the Mexico–U.S. border.

Key Colombian Cartels

1. The Medellín Cartel

The Medellín Cartel was one of the most powerful and ruthless drug trafficking

organizations in history. The Medellín Cartel's notable leader was Pablo Escobar and this cartel's primary activity is the trafficking of cocaine. . Escobar, famously called “*The King of Cocaine*”, built the cartel into an international empire using a combination of violence, corruption, and bribery. They famously employed a “plata o plomo” (silver or lead) strategy, offering officials the choice between bribes or assassination to secure their operations. Additionally, this cartel is best known for having dominated the cocaine trade in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as their immense wealth, power and violent tactics.

At their peak in the 1980s and early 1990s, they controlled the majority of the global cocaine trade, using extreme forms of violence, bribery, and political corruption to maintain their empires. Additionally, the cartel engaged in money laundering, arms trafficking, and political manipulation, even attempting to influence Colombian elections in the late 1980s. Their violent tactics led to a surge in murders, bombings, and kidnappings, destabilizing Colombia politically and socially. They often attacked civilians, government officials and institutions to instill fear, leading to a fall of trust in the Columbian government, international attention on the drug crisis in Latin America and public outcry.

2. The Cali Cartel

The Cali Cartel was a major cartel active during the 1980s and 1990s. It operated in a more secretive manner, relying on bribery, corruption, and hidden networks rather than open violence. They were heavily involved in the production and international distribution of cocaine, especially to North America and Europe. Its activities weakened public institutions, increased corruption, and harmed Colombia's social stability. Their rise led to an expansion of international drug networks and challenges for law enforcement bodies.

Origins of the Illicit Drug Market

The foundations of the illicit drug trade in Latin America are deeply rooted in the region's history. For over 5,000 years, Indigenous Andean communities have cultivated the coca plant, which is native to northern and western South America. Coca leaves held significant cultural, medicinal, and spiritual value and were traditionally used to relieve pain, combat fatigue, and in religious rituals. Importantly, coca cultivation during this period was sustainable and moderate, ensuring the preservation of the plant and surrounding ecosystems. At this stage, coca use posed no major social or political threat.

In the late 19th century, European and American pharmacists and scientists arrived in South America in search of medicinal plants. They discovered the stimulating and pain-relieving properties of the coca leaf and began extracting cocaine for pharmaceutical use. Cocaine was widely exported to Europe and the United States and used in medical treatments, tonics, and early medicines. During this time, coca and cocaine were largely legal and regulated, forming part of legitimate international trade rather than criminal networks.



The transition from legal use to an illicit drug market occurred gradually during the early to mid-20th century. By the 1940s, cocaine was no longer widely accepted for pharmaceutical purposes and became associated with recreational use as an illegal drug. As governments moved to criminalise cocaine production and consumption, demand in fact soared. Instead, prohibition pushed the trade underground to black markets and smuggling, allowing illegal groups to take control of production, processing, and distribution.

As global demand, especially from the United States continued to grow, coca

cultivation expanded rapidly. Many farmers in South America, especially in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, turned to coca farming due to its high profitability and lack of alternatives. For example, Peru currently produces far more coca than is required for traditional or medicinal use, with the surplus directed toward the illegal cocaine market. Criminal organisations capitalised on this system, refining coca into cocaine and establishing complex trafficking routes.

Over time, the illicit drug trade evolved into a powerful transnational criminal industry. The profits generated enabled drug cartels to influence politics, corrupt law enforcement, recruit youth, and challenge state authority. What began as the traditional use of a plant eventually transformed into a system that has significantly affected public health, social stability, and governance across Latin America.

The development of the illicit drug trade in Latin America highlights how historical practices, international demand, and policy decisions combined to create a complex and layered problem. What began as the traditional and medicinal use of natural plants gradually transformed into a global criminal industry due to prohibition, ever-growing greed, economic inequality, and sustained demand from consumer countries.

Understanding these origins is essential for addressing the issue today, as it emphasizes the need for solutions that balance law enforcement with development, public health, and youth-focused prevention strategies to ensure long-term social stability in the region.

Current Situation

Latin America remains the world's primary source of illicit cocaine and a major producer of cannabis. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), global cocaine production reached a historic high of around 3,708 metric tons in 2023, nearly 34% more than in 2022 — the fastest growth in the illicit cocaine market in years. Colombia accounted for over two-thirds (~67%) of global coca cultivation, continuing its role as the largest source of illicit coca leaf and cocaine production worldwide. It continues to be the largest producer of illicit cocaine globally, followed

by Peru and Bolivia, with coca cultivation concentrated in rural and border regions. It is estimated that over 80% of the world's cocaine supply originates in these three countries, with a significant portion trafficked to the United States and Europe. Despite eradication and crop-substitution programs, coca cultivation has remained high due to its profitability, short harvest cycle, and limited economic alternatives for farmers.

Drug trafficking organisations in the region have become increasingly untraceable and decentralised. Many underground tracking rings do exist, unknown to the government or investigators. While major cartels such as the Medellín and Cali cartels were dismantled in the past, their decline led to the rise of dozens of smaller criminal groups operating across national borders. These networks rely on trafficking routes, including land corridors, maritime pathways, and air transport. According to international monitoring agencies, drug trafficking generates tens of billions of dollars annually, much of which is laundered through informal economies, shell companies, and corruption.

The illicit drug trade continues to have a significant impact on youth and public health across Latin America. In many affected communities, young people make up a large proportion of low-level recruits used for transportation, street distribution, and gang-related activities. Increased drug availability has also contributed to rising rates of substance abuse, addiction, and drug-related health complications. Public health systems often lack adequate funding for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation, leaving many young users without long-term support.

Drug trafficking remains a major driver of violence and instability in the region. Several Latin American countries consistently record some of the highest homicide rates in the world, with a substantial share linked to organised crime and drug-related activity. Drug money continues to fuel corruption, weaken judicial systems, and undermine trust in public institutions. Communities affected by trafficking often experience displacement, reduced access to education, and long-term economic insecurity.

Case Study - Youth Involvement in El Salvador's Drug Trade

El Salvador provides a significant case study in understanding how the illicit drug trade affects youth, public health, and social stability, even in countries that are not major producers of drugs. Rather than focusing on large-scale coca cultivation, El Salvador's role in the drug trade is primarily linked to drug trafficking, gang activity, and local distribution networks.

The country has long struggled with powerful street gangs, most notably *MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha)* and *Barrio 18*, which became deeply involved in drug trafficking and related criminal activities. These gangs operate at the community level, controlling neighbourhoods and acting as distributors, transporters, and enforcers within larger regional trafficking routes. El Salvador's geographic location in Central America makes it a strategic transit point for drugs moving from South America toward North American markets.

Youth are among the most affected groups in El Salvador's drug-related crisis. Many young people are recruited into gangs at an early age due to poverty, coercion, lack of access to education, unemployment, and unsafe living conditions. Gangs often provide a sense of identity, protection, and financial support that the state is unable to offer in certain areas. As a result, youth involvement in drug distribution and gang-related violence has become widespread, leading to cycles of crime and social exclusion.

The drug trade and gang violence have placed severe pressure on El Salvador's public health system. Drug use, mental health issues, and trauma caused by prolonged exposure to violence are common, particularly among young people. Young addicts are becoming increasingly common in Central America, where drug use among adolescents has reached concerning levels. While Central American nations have

made some progress in reducing drug trafficking to the USA and Europe, most are losing the battle against drugs at home, especially among the young. Communities affected by gang control experience limited access to healthcare, education, and social services. Fear and instability disrupt daily life, weaken trust in public institutions, and contribute to long-term social fragmentation.

In recent years, El Salvador has adopted strict security-focused policies to address gang violence and drug-related crime. While these measures have led to reductions in visible gang activity and crime rates, concerns remain regarding human rights, overcrowded prisons, and the lack of rehabilitation and reintegration programs for youth. Experts note that without addressing root causes such as poverty, education gaps, and limited economic opportunities, long-term stability remains uncertain.



In recent years, El Salvador has relied heavily on law enforcement to identify and dismantle youth gangs linked to the illicit drug trade. Under a state of exception introduced in 2022, the National Civil Police, supported by the armed forces, have carried out large-scale operations to locate and arrest suspected gang members in urban

communities. These have resulted in tens of thousands of arrests and a visible reduction in gang activity. However, concerns remain regarding due process, overcrowded prisons, and the limited focus on long-term prevention and youth rehabilitation.

This case study highlights the importance of addressing the social and youth-related aspects of the illicit drug trade. The case demonstrates that effective solutions must go beyond law enforcement and include prevention, education, rehabilitation, and community-based development. For UNODC, El Salvador serves as a reminder that tackling drug trafficking requires a balanced approach that strengthens public health

systems and protects young people from exploitation by criminal networks.

Social, Political and Economic Implications

Social Implications

For many years, the illegal drug trade and gang activity shaped everyday life in El Salvador, particularly in low-income urban communities. Gangs such as MS-13 and Barrio 18 controlled neighbourhoods, recruited young people, and used violence to maintain dominance over drug distribution and extortion networks. Before the government's crackdown in 2015, territorial violence between gangs like MS-13 and Barrio 18 drove homicides to one of the world's highest rates — over 100 murders per 100,000 people in 2015 — largely linked to disputes over drug distribution and local rackets.

This environment severely affected families and youth. Children were often pressured to join gangs or abandon school, while parents faced threats, extortion, and forced displacement. Fear of violence disrupted education, weakened community trust, and contributed to large-scale migration, as families fled unsafe areas. Although recent government crackdowns have reduced visible violence, concerns remain about the social cost of mass detentions. Human rights organisations report that minors have been detained under gang-related charges and held in harsh conditions, which have raised concerns about long-term trauma, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society. According to a Human Rights Watch report in February 2025, thousands of minors have been detained under gang-related charges, with some held in adult facilities, raising serious human-rights concerns and exposing young people to harsh conditions with limited rehabilitation support.

Apart from engaging in drug trafficking and the production and distribution of substances, cartels are also known for regularly kidnapping innocent civilians for

ransom, as well as extorting businesses in order to finance their ever expanding operations. Several minors are often coerced into sex trafficking, child labour, and are

exploited and taken advantage of in horrifying ways. The illegal drug trade not only leaves detrimental impacts on families and children, but also the environment. The production of certain drugs, especially coca and marijuana, leads to deforestation, soil degradation, and water pollution, particularly in rural and border areas. Forests are cleared to create hidden transit routes or temporary storage sites, while chemicals used in drug processing contaminate nearby rivers and farmland.

Political Implications

Cartels pose the most threat to South American governments, out of all criminal organizations, as they wreck nationwide chaos, disrupt governance and shake the people's trust in the government. They destabilize entire regions and cause global controversy. Ecuador and Venezuela, in particular, have both become crucial transit points for cocaine. On one hand, Ecuador has evolved from simply a transit point to becoming a logistical distribution center for cocaine which is headed to Europe and the U.S. On the other hand, Venezuela has seen a drastic increase in violence linked to the growing involvement of Venezuelan illegal armed groups in the global cocaine trade.

The response to drug trafficking in the region has significantly altered the political landscape. Governments often respond with aggressive strategies to counter the illicit trade network, including militarised policing, deployment of armed forces, and expanded surveillance powers. While these measures may disrupt trafficking networks in the short term, they can also lead to increased militarisation of civilian spaces and allegations of human rights abuses, such as civilian killings and mass detentions.

At the international level, drug trafficking complicates diplomatic relations. South

American countries are frequently portrayed as the primary drivers of the global drug problem, leading to conditional foreign aid, backlash from the international community and external interference in domestic policy decisions. This framing often ignores the role of international demand, financial laundering networks, and arms flows that sustain the illicit drug trade. As a result, drug trafficking remains not only a criminal issue but a persistent political and policy challenge across national and regional frameworks.

Economic Implications

Economically, drug trafficking distorts both local and national economies. The illicit drug trade had become so deeply ingrained in the history of South America that it is a task to eradicate it completely or even control a huge segment of it at best. Although the illicit drug trade generates significant profit for traffickers, these profits rarely contribute to sustainable economic development. Instead, wealth is concentrated within criminal networks and laundered through informal or illegal channels, weakening financial transparency. They are often in the form of black money, which is later laundered through laundering rings or gambled in casinos abroad to whitewash it.

Governments also face substantial financial burdens due to drug trafficking. Large portions of public budgets are directed toward law enforcement, military operations, border control, judicial proceedings, and rehabilitation programmes. Various businesses involved in the sector were forced to shut down due to high extortion “taxes” and eventually went underground, reducing the government’s tax revenue. This further limits a state’s ability to fund essential services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, further worsening inequality and economic vulnerability.

Past U.N. Action

1. Alternative Development Programmes in Colombia

UNODC's Alternative Development programmes aim to reduce coca cultivation by helping rural farmers transition from illicit crops to legal, sustainable livelihoods. Rather than relying solely on eradication, these projects work within broader national development strategies to improve quality of life and economic opportunity for communities dependent on coca farming. UNODC provides technical assistance, training, and support in marketing legal products, while also helping governments design policies that align with international drug control conventions and local socio-cultural needs. These efforts have been part of Colombia's long-term strategy to reduce dependence on coca, complementing public policy aimed at sustainable rural growth.

2. UNODC - Colombia Coca Crop Reduction Agreements

UNODC has partnered with the Colombian government to tackle coca cultivation within peace and development frameworks. These agreements focus on crop substitution involving switching to traditional plants for consumption, social infrastructure improvement, and community development in areas affected by illicit crops especially those invaded with gangs and youth recruitment agencies. By linking illicit crop reduction to broader peacebuilding goals, the programme supports farmers with income opportunities, integrates development goals with drug control policy and works towards building a stronger economy on merit goods. Over decades, this approach has helped thousands of families shift away from coca production and contributed to incredible reductions in coca-grown land.

3. CRIMJUST Global Programme

The CRIMJUST Global programme aims to strengthen criminal justice and transnational cooperation along drug trafficking routes, moving beyond simple interdiction to enhance law enforcement and judicial systems. Launched sometime around 2016, it helps countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, West Africa, and

Europe to conduct transnational investigations, prosecutions, and joint case work against organised crime networks. CRIMJUST supports training for prosecutors and investigators, promotes information sharing through joint investigation teams, and fosters cooperation. The programme also emphasises ethical, human-rights-based, and gender-responsive approaches to ensure investigations run smoothly while dismantling and eventually erasing criminal networks that traffic drugs, launder funds, and exploit vulnerable citizens.

4. Container Control/Passenger & Cargo Control Programme

The UNODC–WCO Container Control Programme (CCP) was launched in 2004 in partnership with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to strengthen border controls against illicit trafficking, including drugs hidden in international cargo. It helps countries establish Joint Port Control Units (PCUs) and Air Cargo Control Units (ACCUs) that bring together customs, police, and other agencies to profile high-risk containers, share intelligence, and inspect suspicious shipments. Because maritime shipping carries most global trade but less than 2 % of containers are physically checked, the programme focuses on risk management, training, and international cooperation to disrupt drug routes without hindering legal trade. In 2025, CCP merged with the Airport Communication Programme into the Passenger & Cargo Control Programme (PCCP) to further unify border efforts across land, air, and sea.

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