UNODC

SAMUN XV

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Letters from Presidents

Letter from President Abuchaibe

Dear Delegates,

It is a pleasure to warmly welcome all of you to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) committee at SAMUN XV. My name is Victoria Abuchaibe, and I have the honor of serving as your committee president.

First, I would like to recognize the dedication and effort each of you has shown by participating in this conference. Being part of a Model United Nations requires preparation, critical thinking, and a willingness to discuss important global issues.

During our sessions, I encourage you to maintain respect, collaboration, and diplomacy in every debate and interaction. These values are essential to creating meaningful discussions and developing thoughtful solutions to the challenges we will address.

I hope this experience allows you to strengthen your leadership, communication, and negotiation skills, while also giving you the opportunity to meet new people and learn from different perspectives.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me through my institutional email (victoria.abuchaibe-serrano@cbsm.edu.co). President Acevedo and I wish you the best of luck and look forward to meeting all of you.

Sincerely,

Victoria Abuchaibe

Letter from President Acevedo

Dear delegates,

Welcome to SAMUN XV! I am very happy to welcome you to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It is an honor to have you participating in this committee, where

we will be discussing important global issues related to the international drug trade and the shared responsibility of producing, transit, and consumer countries.

In this committee, you will have the opportunity to represent your country, explore different perspectives, and work together to develop possible solutions to a complex global issue. I encourage you to come prepared, participate actively, and enjoy the experience of debate and collaboration.

This study guide was created to support your preparation and help you better understand the topics we will discuss. However, if you have any questions about the guide, the topic, or the committee, please feel free to contact me through my institutional email (julieta.acevedo-pitre@cbsm.edu.co). I will be more than grateful to help and make sure you feel confident and ready for the debate.

Me and President Abuchaibe look forward to meeting all of you and to having a dynamic, respectful, and engaging experience at SAMUN XV.

Best luck with your preparation!

Sincerely,

Julieta Acevedo

History of the committee (Introduction to UNODC)

The UN established the United Nations Committee against Drug and Crime (UNODC) in 1997 as a result of the merging of the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. This committee is responsible for assisting countries and preventing organized crime and the drug trade around the world. UNODC seeks to reduce violence, promote security, and build safer and fairer societies by addressing the root causes of drug and crime around the world. It works by supporting governments in creating and improving laws, justice systems, and public policies that combat drug trafficking, organized crime, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, money laundering, cybercrime, and corruption, while also promoting crime prevention and access to justice. In addition, UNODC provides technical assistance, including training for police officers, judges, and prosecutors.

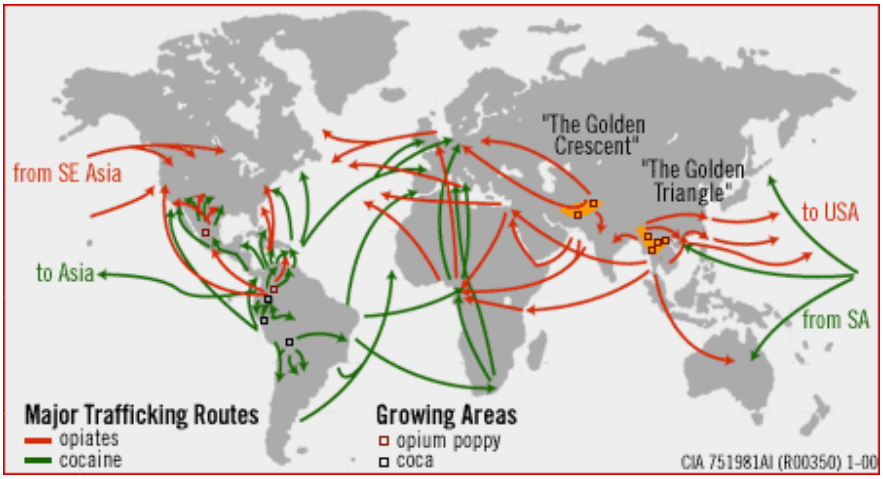
UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Introduction Topic A: International Responsibility in Producing, Transit, and Consumer Countries

Key concepts

1. **Producing Countries:** states where illicit crops are cultivated or drugs are manufactured, often affected by rural poverty, weak governance and armed conflict.
2. **Transit Countries:** states whose territory is used as corridors for trafficking routes, frequently suffering high levels of violence, corruption and institutional destabilization.
3. **Consumer Countries:** states with high levels of drug consumption that generate sustained demand and long-term profitability for criminal organizations.
4. **International responsibility:** the idea that all countries involved in the drug trade — producers, transit states, and consumers — share responsibility in addressing the problem.
5. **Shared Responsibility Principle:** a framework promoted by the UNODC stating that the global drug problem cannot be solved by one group of countries alone, and that responsibility must be shared based on each country's role.
6. **Supply–Demand Dynamics:** the relationship between drug production (supply) and drug consumption (demand). Higher demand increases production and trafficking.

Introduction



The global drug problem is a transnational challenge that cannot be attributed to a single group of states. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the international drug trade operates through a complex chain that involves producing, transit, and consumer countries, each of them playing a different yet interdependent role in sustaining illicit markets. As drug production, trafficking, and consumption continue to expand across borders, the need for a global shared responsibility approach has become increasingly urgent.

Producing countries are often facing structural vulnerability such as rural poverty, weak governance and armed conflict, which contributes to a dependence on illicit crop cultivation and drug manufacturing. Transit countries, positioned along key trafficking routes, experience high levels of violence, corruption, and institutional destabilization as criminal organizations keep exploiting geographic and regulatory gaps to move drugs toward global markets.

Consumer countries have a significant role in creating the ongoing demand that drives the long-term profitability of large-scale organized crime networks. For the purpose of having a sustained response to the drug crisis, it is necessary for there to be not only increased law enforcement efforts to disrupt the supply of drugs, but also an expansion of demand reduction policy initiatives, public health approaches, anti-money laundering/financial oversight initiatives, and preventative programs.

Ultimately, the task of this committee is to move from a narrative that blames one country or group of countries for the problem caused by illicit drug trafficking to creating a framework of shared responsibility among producing, transit, and consuming countries, while simultaneously developing policies that support sustainable economic development, promote public health, and respect the rule of law.

Current Situation and Approach

The global drug issue continues to expand in scale, complexity and impact, which is representing a growing threat for international security, public health, economic stability and the rule of law. Based on the UNODC, an estimated 316 million people worldwide consumed drugs in 2023, representing a significant increase in comparison to the past decade. Cannabis continues to be the most consumed substance, followed by opioids, amphetamine-type substances, cocaine, and ecstasy. At the same time, 64 million people globally are facing

disorders due to drug consumption, yet only a small percentage are getting adequate treatment, highlighting a crucial gap in global public health response by the authorities.

Drug trafficking networks have significantly evolved in response to globalization, political instability and new technologies in the market. The market of cocaine and synthetic drugs is booming in a way that was never seen before, with cocaine production reaching all-time high levels and synthetic drugs (e.g., methamphetamine and fentanyl) growing rapidly thanks to their low cost of production and their easy transport. According to UNODC, amphetamines-type stimulants are now portraying almost half of all synthetic drug seizures worldwide, while synthetic opioids are fueling overdose crises in many regions. These trends represent a clear remoteness from traditional drugs of plant origin to laboratory made substances, which are way more harder to detect and regulate.

In addition to the production and use of drugs, trafficking is also responsible for organized crime, corruption, money laundering, arm trafficking, environmental damage and violence. Criminal groups keep exploiting digital networks, online markets, encrypted communications and global financial systems to transport drugs and launder profits. The intersection of drug trafficking and cybercrimeposes a threat to the law enforcement agencies of countries and highlights the need for innovation in law enforcement.

To address these new threats, UNODC encourages a balanced and shared responsibility approach that combines supply reduction, demand reduction, criminal justice reform,

financial control, and sustainable development. This approach focuses on the dismantling of transnational organized crime groups, enhancing border and customs cooperation, fighting illicit financial flows, and implementing the international drug control treaties as a legal framework for international cooperation.

However, the international community is urged to enhance public health-oriented policies, such as prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, harm reduction, and education, in order to reduce long-term demand. Moreover, alternative development projects have a vital role in assisting farmers in drug-producing countries by providing sustainable legal livelihoods, while still addressing the socioeconomic factors that lead to the cultivation of illicit crops.

Eventually, the present reality is that states must now transcend punitive and unilateral approaches in favor of international cooperation, innovation in law enforcement and financial regulation, and a more balanced approach to security, public health, human rights, and sustainable development. Only through collective responsibility can the international community adequately address the rapidly evolving world drug problem.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Plan Colombia - Limits of Supply-Side Enforcement

- Plan Colombia (2000) primarily aimed for a reduction of coca crops by military intervention and forced eradication. Although it led to a temporary reduction of coca production in some areas, the coca crops eventually increased and moved to other

regions, which is known as the "balloon effect." Plan Colombia has also been criticized for its impact on rural poverty, the environment, and the lack of economic alternatives for farmers. This case demonstrates that enforcement alone is insufficient without alternative development and rural economic support in producing countries.

Case Study 2: Transatlantic Cocaine Trafficking - Pressure on Transit Countries

- The cocaine smuggling route that connects South America and Europe is based on sea routes and large seaports, which puts a lot of pressure on the countries that are transit states. The organized crime groups take advantage of corruption, weak border controls, and vulnerabilities in major ports, contributing to violence, institutional strain, and criminal infiltration in these regions. This case helps to understand that transit countries must not be left to manage this burden alone; they require international cooperation, stronger port security, effective intelligence-sharing, and shared responsibility.

Case Study 3: Rising Cocaine demand - The problem of Consumer Countries

- UNODC reports show that the production and consumption of cocaine are on the rise globally, especially in North America and Western Europe. This sustained demand provides major profits for organized crime, reinforces trafficking networks, and facilitates money laundering across international financial systems. This case emphasizes the need for consumer countries to focus on demand reduction, public

health responses, and stronger financial oversight, rather than just relying solely on supply-side repression.

Relevant Actors

Colombia is a highly significant producer country and one of the world's leading sources of coca cultivation and cocaine production. According to reports from the UNODC, it continues to face persistent challenges linked to rural poverty, the presence of illegal armed groups, limited state presence in remote areas, and economic dependence on illicit crops. Despite extensive international cooperation and alternative development programs, drug production remains closely connected to structural inequality and governance gaps. This reality places Colombia at the center of debates on shared responsibility and sustainable strategies for reducing supply.

Afghanistan is another major producer country, historically responsible for most of the world's opium and heroin production. Prolonged conflict, economic instability, and weak institutional capacity have contributed to the persistence of illicit crop cultivation. In recent years, the political and security situation under the Taliban has further complicated international counter-narcotics cooperation and regulatory efforts. At the same time, Afghanistan has seen rising domestic drug use, showing how producer countries can face both supply and public health challenges

simultaneously. This underscores the need for integrated approaches that combine security, development, and treatment policies.

Mexico is one of the most important transit countries in the global drug trade, serving as a key corridor between South America and North America. Powerful organized crime groups - such as the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel - exploit border vulnerabilities, corruption, and gaps in law enforcement to transport drugs across the region. Their activities contribute to high levels of violence and social destabilization. Mexico's experience highlights how transit countries often bear disproportionate security costs, despite not being the primary producers or final consumer markets.

Spain also acts as a strategic transit and gateway country between Latin America and Europe due to its geographic location and maritime infrastructure. Trafficking networks frequently use Spanish ports and transport systems to move drugs into European consumer markets. In response, Spain has strengthened customs controls, international intelligence-sharing, and expanded international law enforcement cooperation. These efforts highlight the importance of regional coordination and cross-border collaboration in addressing transnational trafficking routes.

The United States is one of the world's largest consumer countries, with sustained demand for cocaine, opioids, cannabis, and synthetic drugs. This demand generates long-term profits for transnational criminal organizations and fuels global trafficking networks. While U.S. policy has historically focused on supply-side enforcement, it has increasingly incorporated public health-centered strategies such as prevention, treatment, and harm reduction. As a result, the United States plays a central role in discussions surrounding demand reduction and shared international responsibility.

The Netherlands plays an important role as both a consumer country and a logistical hub, due to its major European ports and advanced commercial infrastructure. Organized crime groups exploit these systems to import and distribute drugs across European markets, particularly through key hubs such as the Port of Rotterdam. In response, Dutch authorities have expanded financial investigations, enhanced port security, and strengthened international police cooperation. This illustrates how consumer countries also function as financial and logistical nodes in the global drug economy.

QARMAs

1. How can shared responsibility be implemented without reinforcing politics, blame between producer and consumer countries?

2. What international mechanisms can regulate chemical precursors without harming legitimate industrial trade?
3. How should consumer countries balance public health approaches with law enforcement strategies?

Questions

1. How should the principle of shared responsibility be applied between producing, transit, and consumer countries to address the global drug problem fairly?
2. Is it realistic to expect farmers in producing countries to abandon illicit crops without guaranteed economic alternatives and fair international market access?
3. What concrete actions should consumer countries take to reduce drug demand and weaken the profitability of trafficking networks?
4. What responsibility do chemical-producing countries have in controlling precursor substances used to manufacture synthetic drugs such as fentanyl?
5. How can countries move beyond blaming each other and instead develop coordinated international solutions across the entire drug supply chain?

Useful Links

- https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/legal-framework.html
- https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/speeches/enhancing-global-security_-a-shared-responsibility.html

- https://www.unodc.org/documents/AnnualReport/UNODC_REPORT_2024_MAY6_WEB.pdf
- https://www.unodc.org/southasia/frontpage/2012/August/drug-trafficking-a-business-affecting-communities-globally.html
- https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR_2025/WDR25_B2_Contemporary_drug_issues.pdf
- https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Transatlantic_cocaine_market.pdf
- https://sek.es/pdfs/actividades/sekmun/unodc/guide2_unodc.pdf
- https://reliefweb.int/report/world/unodc-world-drug-report-2022
- https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR_2025/maps/01_Main_methamphetamine_trafficking_flows_as_described_in_reported_seizures_2020-2023.pdf

Introduction Topic B: State Capacity vs Criminal Power

Key Concepts:

1. **State Capacity:** the ability of a government to enforce laws, maintain security, uphold justice, and control criminal activity within its territory.
2. **Criminal Power:** structured criminal groups that operate nationally or internationally to profit from illegal activities such as drug trafficking and money laundering.

3. **Cyber-Enabled Crime:** criminal operations that use digital tools such as the Dark Web, encrypted platforms, and online financial systems to avoid law enforcement.
4. **Corruption:** the abuse of public power for private gain, weakening institutions and enabling criminal organizations to expand their influence.
5. **Money Laundering:** the process of hiding the illegal origin of criminal profits to integrate them into the legal financial systems.

Introduction

The rise of organized crime represents a direct challenge to state authority and democratic institutions. As organized crime becomes more globalized, high-tech, and financially strong, it also represents a direct challenge to the state's ability to maintain the rule of law. The gap between the capacity of states and the power of organized crime is particularly evident in regions characterized by corruption, poor governance, economic inequality, and state fragility.

Organized crime, according to the UNODC, thrives in environments characterized by weak law enforcement, high levels of corruption, porous borders, and a lack of state presence. In states that are weak or failing, organized crime takes advantage of “power vacuums” and exercises its power freely, infiltrating state institutions and creating parallel systems of governance, in some instances becoming “quasi-states” themselves that provide jobs, security, or illicit economic opportunities.

Inequalities in the international system also contribute to the rise of organized crime. Disparities in legal frameworks, border control capacity, economic power, and regulatory frameworks create “criminogenic asymmetries” that organized crime takes advantage of in order to establish illicit markets and routes. This enables organized crime to operate across multiple national jurisdictions, making it difficult to dismantle.

This issue briefly presents a challenge to delegates to consider how states can build resilience against institutional threats, reduce corruption, improve legal and financial frameworks, and resist the influence of organized crime, while upholding human rights, promoting transparency, and ensuring sustainable development.

Current Situation and Approach

Organized crime's growth has shifted the power dynamics between governments and organized crime groups. Criminal networks are now more globalized, technologically sophisticated, and economically robust than ever before, allowing them to exploit weak institutions and gaps in governance. In regions with high levels of corruption, limited institutional capacity,y and economic disparities, organized crime groups frequently undermine government authority over violence and the enforcement of the law.

In addition, the rise of cybercrime has complicated law enforcement's ability to perform its duties. Criminal organizations employ encrypted communications, internet-based

marketplaces, and electronic payment systems to conceal their activities from law enforcement and enhance the size of their illicit markets. These developments have rendered traditional enforcement approaches obsolete, resulting in governments adopting new ways of using technology and cooperation to combat these types of crime.

Countries with strong institutions prioritize the enhancement of financial regulations, cross-border intelligence sharing, and anti-corruption policies. On the other hand, weaker countries still struggle to maintain control over the areas where organized crime groups have established their own system of governance, sometimes offering economic opportunities or security in places where the government is absent.

As a result, the international community finds itself caught in a difficult predicament as it tries to figure out how to help developing countries build their state capacity while at the same time supporting human rights, democracy and sustainable development. Delegates should consider if enforcement-focused approaches are taking precedence over resilient, developable institutional frameworks with long-term viability.

Relevant Actors

Colombia

Colombia represents a key example of the struggle between state capacity and criminal power. Despite improvements in institutional strength, criminal groups continue to exploit rural inequality, weak territorial

control, and illicit economies. The country illustrates how strengthening governance and alternative development programs remains essential for reducing criminal influence.

Mexico

Mexico faces powerful organized crime groups that challenge state authority through violence, corruption, and territorial control. Its experience demonstrates how transit countries often experience significant institutional pressure when criminal organizations exploit border vulnerabilities and enforcement gaps.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands shows how advanced logistical infrastructure can be exploited by organized crime networks. Dutch authorities have responded with stronger financial investigations, port security measures, and international cooperation, highlighting the role of institutional resilience in high-capacity states.

The United States

The United States is a central actor due to its large consumer market and evolving policies that combine enforcement with public health approaches. Its policies

influence international strategies regarding organized crime, financial regulation, and institutional cooperation.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan represents a context where prolonged conflict and weak governance structures allow criminal networks to thrive. It highlights how fragile states may struggle to compete with the economic and political influence of organized crime.

QARMAs

1. How can states strengthen institutional capacity without expanding surveillance or security policies that threaten human rights?

2. What international mechanisms could improve cooperation against cyber-enabled crime and money laundering?

3. Should international organizations prioritize institutional development over punitive enforcement strategies when addressing organized crime?

Questions

1. How can states reduce the power gap between criminal organizations and government institutions?

2. What role does corruption play in weakening state authority, and how can it be addressed effectively at the international level?

3. To what extent should technology be used in law enforcement without violating privacy rights?

4. How can financial systems be reformed to prevent money laundering while maintaining global economic stability?

5. What strategies can fragile states adopt to prevent criminal organizations from creating parallel governance structures?

Useful Links

https://police.un.org/en/serious-and-organized-crime.com

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/index.html

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/global-programme-against-money-laundering.html

https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Illicit_financial_flows_2011_web.pdf

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