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Daring Democracy



# Background Guide

## The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

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## Word of Welcome from the Chairs

Dear delegates,

It is our utmost pleasure to welcome you to MainMUN 2026, to Goethe University, and to the “heart of Europe,” Frankfurt am Main. We are very much looking forward to spending four days full of fruitful debates, inspiring personal exchanges, and exciting encounters with you.

Of course, working in a formal session, lobbying, negotiating a compromise, and passing resolutions will only be one aspect of your experience at MainMUN. After your diplomatic work is done for the day, you will have the opportunity to enjoy a rich academic and, above all, social program. MUNs are an exhilarating chance to broaden your horizons, step out of your comfort zone, develop empathy for others' points of view while passionately representing your own, and, most importantly, meet and socialize with open-minded, smart, and fun people from all over the world.

It is up to you how you want to seize this wonderful opportunity to take part in one of Germany's biggest MUN. We, your Chairs, are always available to advise, support, and assist you.

A little bit about us:

Hello everyone! It is my pleasure to be your Chair of the 2026 edition of MainMUN! My name is Xuan Lee Hoang, I am a third-semester student of International Relations at the Hochschule Rhein-Waal of Applied Sciences in Kleve. Apart from attending MUN's and my studies, I love to travel and meet up with my friends. I am looking forward for a fruitful and insightful discussion !

Dear delegates, together with my Co-Chair, I have the honor to moderate your committee. Being a MainMUN team member and chair since 2019, I enjoy the interesting debates, and meeting both new and familiar faces at the conference. On the personal side, I hold a bachelor's degree in Economics and Philosophy from Frankfurt School of Finance & Management, while currently working full time in real-estate administration. Further, I enjoy time with my friends, talking politics, and have a passion for hiking. Looking forward to meeting you in Frankfurt and to carry on the MUN spirit once again!

We will be there to guide you throughout the conference and are happy to answer any questions that might arise concerning the topic, the conference, your position paper, rules of procedure, or anything else regarding MUN. We are happy to welcome you soon in the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice!

Warm regards,

Xuan Lee and Julian



## CCPCJ Committee Introduction

The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1992 as the UN's main policymaking body for crime prevention, combating transnational crime, improving justice systems, promoting the rule of law, and supporting SDG 16. It is considered the main intergovernmental body within the UN system dealing with crime and developing strategies to guide the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

### CCPCJ within the UN Organization

The CCPCJ is one of ECOSOC's commissions. The mandate includes reviewing and tracking global crime trends, negotiating and shaping multi-year policymaking strategies for international crime prevention. Alongside, CCPCJ monitors the implementation of major UN conventions

CCPCJ's authority is normative yet powerful, creating international standards that can carry significant political weight.

### Fields of action and responsibilities

CCPCJ's actions are multi-faceted and are specifically grounded in ECOSOC's responsibilities for economic development, social progress, international cooperation on crime control, strengthening the rule of law, and justice systems. As for CCPCJ, this functional commission reviews the implementation of UN crime conventions and offers guidance on UNODC's crime-related work.

The core areas include:

- Transnational organized crime
- Criminal Justice Reform
- International Cooperation in evidence-sharing and examination
- Calling out for emerging crime trends such as cybercrime and misuse
- Strengthening global legal frameworks, promoting universal standards to the UN crime conventions

The Commission's work is directly linked to the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, especially:

- **SDG 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies; reduce corruption, violence, and strengthen the rule of law
- **SDG 5:** Address gender-based violence (relevant when discussing online violence, image-based abuse, AI-generated harm)
- **SDG 9:** Promote resilient infrastructure and responsible innovation (relevant for AI governance and cybersecurity)
- **SDG 17:** Strengthen global partnerships for crime data, information exchange, and capacity-building

**ECOSOC Resolution 1992/1** (establishment of CCPCJ)

**Doha Declaration (2015):** Integrating crime prevention with the broader UN agenda while promoting public participation

**Kyoto Declaration (2021):** Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice, and the Rule of Law: Towards The Achievement Of The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development

**United Nations Convention against Cybercrime (2024):** Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes

# Topic 1: Combating Cybercrime and the Misuse of Artificial Intelligence

## Introduction

Cybercrime has become more relevant than ever, rapidly escalating into one of the most interrelated and complex global threats, including ransomware, data breaches, financial fraud, identity theft, and online exploitation.

Global losses are estimated at \$8 trillion in 2023 with alarming reports of UNODC of an increase in ransomware, phishing, financial fraud, malware proliferation, and online sexual exploitation.

Simultaneously, artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly abused for automating cyberattacks, generating deepfakes, hacking through advanced pattern recognition, creating fraudulent identities, and launching AI-driven phishing attacks

Academic studies underline three structural drivers of cybercrime growth:

- **Low risk of detection:** Cybercrime often has detection rates below 5% due to encryption and anonymity technologies (Holt & Bossler, 2021).
- **High profitability:** Ransomware payments have increased by over 300% since 2020 (Europol, 2022)
- **Cross-border anonymity:** Jurisdictional gaps inhibit prosecution of transnational offenders (Brenner, 2010)

The absence of harmonized global legislation leaves Member States with widely different capacities to respond

According to a 2023 Europol–UNICRI–Trend Micro joint report, AI presents risks across all stages of the criminal pipeline—data collection, attack execution, laundering, and evasion in various ways:

### Forms of AI-Enabled Criminal Misuse:

- **Deepfakes and Synthetic Media:**  
Deepfake-enabled fraud and identity manipulation have surged, with a 300% increase in reported cases between 2020 and 2023 (MIT CSAIL, 2022). Studies show deepfake sexual content disproportionately targets women and girls, creating a gendered digital violence pattern (Laffier & Rehman, 2023)
- **AI-Enhanced Cyberattacks:**  
Machine learning tools can optimize phishing attacks, bypass CAPTCHA systems, or identify vulnerabilities faster than human attackers (Brundage et al., 2018).
- **AI-Driven Disinformation:**  
Large language models can generate fake narratives at scale, eroding trust in democratic processes (West, 2021).
- **Automated Hacking Tools:**  
Academics show that reinforcement learning systems can autonomously discover new malware mutations, posing risks for highly scalable cyberattacks (Kumar et al., 2022).

The issue of combating cybercrime and the misuse of artificial intelligence is deeply multidimensional, encompassing legal, technological, economic, social, and human rights considerations. Unlike traditional forms of crime, cybercrime operates across physical borders, legal jurisdictions, and governance frameworks, requiring responses that transcend purely national approaches. The integration of artificial intelligence further amplifies these complexities, as AI systems are not only tools used by criminals but also technologies deployed by states for crime prevention, investigation, and surveillance.



Existing cybercrime legislation in many states remains technologically neutral and was not designed with autonomous or semi-autonomous systems in mind, creating interpretative gaps that risk under-criminalization or inconsistent enforcement.

This asymmetry benefits criminal actors, who can exploit open-source AI models and commercially available tools with minimal technical expertise.

AI-driven financial fraud has increased the scale and sophistication of illicit financial flows, a core concern of the CCPCJ in the context of SDG 16.

The social harms caused by AI-abuse include the growing prevalence of online harm, harassment, and exploitation. AI-generated sexual abuse material, identity theft, and targeted disinformation campaigns disproportionately affect women, minorities, journalists, and political actors, reinforcing existing inequalities and social fragmentation

These harms blur the line between cybercrime and human rights violations, underscoring the need for victim-centered approaches.

## Relevant Institutions

Beyond the core United Nations system, a number of international and regional organizations play a crucial role in shaping responses to cybercrime and AI-enabled criminal activity. Among these, **INTERPOL** serves as a central platform for transnational law enforcement cooperation. Through its **Cybercrime Directorate**, INTERPOL facilitates real-time information sharing, operational coordination, and joint investigations across jurisdictions. It supports member states through specialized cyber operations, incident response mechanisms, and secure communication channels, enabling national authorities to address crimes that frequently transcend territorial boundaries. Given the borderless nature of cybercrime, INTERPOL's operational role is essential for overcoming jurisdictional fragmentation and enabling collective enforcement efforts (Europol, 2023).

Another key actor is the **United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)**, which focuses on research-based policy development and forward-looking analysis. UNICRI has become particularly influential in examining emerging technological threats, including the criminal misuse of artificial intelligence. Its work emphasizes the ethical, legal, and institutional implications of deploying AI in law enforcement, such as algorithmic bias, accountability, and proportionality. By developing ethical guidelines and promoting best practices, UNICRI contributes to ensuring that technological innovation in criminal justice remains consistent with human rights standards and the rule of law (Velasco, 2022).

At the regional level, **Europol** plays a significant role in addressing cybercrime within the European Union, while also producing analytical outputs with broader international relevance. Europol's **Internet Organized Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA)** provides empirical, intelligence-led insights into evolving cybercrime trends, including ransomware, data theft, and the increasing use of automation and artificial intelligence by organized criminal groups. Although Europol's operational mandate is regionally limited, its assessments are widely referenced by policymakers and law enforcement agencies worldwide, contributing to a shared understanding of global cybercrime dynamics (Europol, 2023).

In addition, the **Council of Europe's Budapest Convention on Cybercrime** remains a cornerstone of international cooperation in this field. While not universally ratified, the Convention establishes comprehensive standards for substantive criminal law, procedural powers, and international cooperation related to cybercrime. Its provisions on digital evidence, mutual legal assistance, and expedited cooperation mechanisms have strongly influenced both national legislation and international practice. Academic analyses highlight that although the Convention does not explicitly address artificial intelligence, its technology-neutral framework allows it to be interpreted flexibly in cases involving AI-mediated criminal conduct, thereby maintaining its relevance amid rapid technological change (Velasco, 2022).

## Current Focus of International Action

Current international efforts in addressing cybercrime and AI-enabled criminal activity are increasingly structured around three interrelated and mutually reinforcing objectives.

First, a central priority is the negotiation of a **comprehensive United Nations convention on cybercrime**, led by the **Ad Hoc Committee established under UN General Assembly Resolution 74/247**. These negotiations aim to address longstanding gaps in the international legal framework by harmonizing definitions of cybercrime, clarifying jurisdictional rules, and strengthening mechanisms for cross-border cooperation. A key objective is to reduce legal fragmentation that currently allows offenders to exploit inconsistencies between national systems. However, the process has also generated significant debate, particularly regarding the scope of criminalization, the protection of human rights, and safeguards against the misuse of surveillance powers (UNGA, 2019).

Second, international organizations are placing increasing emphasis on **capacity-building**, especially in developing states. UNODC, in cooperation with regional partners, prioritizes training for cyber investigators, prosecutors, and judges, as well as the development of digital forensic infrastructure. These initiatives seek to address disparities in technical expertise and institutional capacity, which research identifies as one of the most significant barriers to effective global enforcement against cybercrime. Without adequate technical resources, many states remain unable to participate meaningfully in international cooperation frameworks, undermining collective responses to transnational cyber threats (Holt & Bossler, 2021).

Third, there is growing international attention directed toward the **governance of artificial intelligence**, particularly in relation to accountability, transparency, and ethical standards. While AI governance is discussed across multiple United Nations bodies, including those focused on education and human rights, the **CCPCJ contributes a distinct criminal justice perspective**. Its work emphasizes issues such as the criminal misuse of AI, attribution of responsibility, evidentiary challenges, and enforcement gaps. By addressing AI from the standpoint of crime prevention and criminal justice, the CCPCJ helps bridge the gap between technological governance and practical law enforcement concerns, ensuring that emerging regulatory frameworks remain operationally relevant (Velasco, 2022).

## Research Recommendations

In preparing for the debate, delegates may consider the following guiding questions:

1. How can international criminal law adapt to address AI-enabled crimes without undermining principles of legality and due process?
2. To what extent should a future UN cybercrime convention explicitly regulate artificial intelligence, rather than relying on technology-neutral provisions?
3. How can states balance the use of AI for crime prevention with the protection of privacy and other fundamental rights?
4. What role should private technology companies play in detecting, preventing, and reporting AI-driven cybercrime?
5. How can the CCPCJ strengthen capacity-building efforts while respecting national sovereignty and differing levels of technological development?

Academic research from journals such as *ERA Forum*, *Journal of Cybersecurity*, *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, and policy papers from institutions such as UNICRI, OECD, and the World Economic Forum provide valuable analytical depth.

## Preparation for the Debate

For effective participation, delegates should develop a clear understanding of their country's existing cybercrime legislation, national AI strategies, and position on international cyber governance. Comparing domestic frameworks with international standards allows delegates to identify gaps, priorities, and potential areas for cooperation.

During debate, delegates are encouraged to move beyond general statements of concern and propose concrete measures, such as harmonized legal definitions, regional capacity-building initiatives, or safeguards for rights-based AI governance. Given the technical nature of the topic, clarity, feasibility, and respect for differing levels of development will be essential to productive negotiations.

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## Topic 2: Strengthening International Cooperation to Combat Illicit Drug Trafficking

### Introduction

In today's highly interconnected world, the trafficking of illicit drugs has reached unprecedented levels, generating a wide range of challenges related to human health, public safety, the stability of state institutions, and environmental sustainability. Despite decades of global efforts, drug trafficking remains one of the most profitable activities of organized crime, providing criminal networks with extensive financial resources, advanced technology, and transnational reach. The controversial outcomes of the so-called "War on Drugs" have further intensified debates about the effectiveness of prohibition-focused approaches and the need for reform.

As illicit drug markets operate across borders, effective countermeasures require international cooperation between law enforcement agencies, judicial authorities, and international organizations. However, differences in national legislation, institutional capacity, and political priorities continue to hinder unified action. With this topic on its agenda, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) addresses the question of how international collaboration can be strengthened to combat illicit drug trafficking more effectively. This Background Guide (BGG) provides an overview of key definitions, substances, historical and societal dimensions, and the current focus of action of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), serving as a foundation for further individual research.

### Relevant Definitions and Substances

#### Illicit Drug Trafficking

Illicit drug trafficking refers to the production, distribution, and sale of substances that are prohibited or strictly controlled under national and international law. These activities are predominantly carried out by organized criminal networks operating across borders. While national legal classifications of substances vary, there is broad international consensus on the need to regulate psychotropic drugs that pose significant risks to consumers (UNODC, 2009).

#### Drug Addiction

Drug addiction is a chronic medical condition characterized by physical and psychological dependence on a substance. Withdrawal symptoms can include severe physical discomfort, psychological distress, and impaired cognitive functioning, often compelling individuals to continue consumption. In the context of illicit drug trafficking, addiction generates sustained demand, thereby reinforcing and stabilizing illegal markets (UNODC, 2025).

#### Opium and Opiates

Opium is derived from the coagulated sap of the opium poppy and has long been used for medical pain relief. However, it carries a high risk of abuse, addiction, and overdose. Advances in chemistry during the nineteenth century enabled the extraction of morphine, and later the synthesis of heroin, significantly increasing potency and health risks. Opioids include substances derived from opium as well as synthetic alternatives with similar effects, such as fentanyl. Synthetic opioids have played a central role in the ongoing overdose crisis in North America (UNODC, 2025).

#### Cocaine

Cocaine is produced through chemical processing of coca leaves, which are cultivated primarily in Latin America. The drug stimulates the central nervous system by increasing dopamine levels, resulting in short-term euphoria and heightened performance. Long-term consumption is associated with severe health risks, including cardiovascular failure, strokes, and psychological disorders. Cocaine production and trafficking are almost entirely controlled by organized crime, with highly sophisticated global supply chains (UNODC, 2009).

## Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS)

Amphetamine-type stimulants, including amphetamine, methamphetamine, and MDMA (ecstasy), are mostly synthetic substances that stimulate the central nervous system. While some amphetamines have legitimate medical applications, illicit ATS production is associated with significant health risks due to inconsistent purity and dosage. Dependence can be severe, with withdrawal often causing depression, cognitive impairment, and memory loss (UNODC, 2025).

## Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens are natural or synthetic substances that distort perception and consciousness. Well-known examples include LSD, mescaline, and psilocybin. Although some hallucinogens are increasingly researched for controlled medical use, illicit consumption can lead to long-term cognitive damage and psychological harm, particularly when dosage and composition are unknown (UNODC, 2009).

## Cannabis

Cannabis contains the psychoactive compound tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which can have relaxing or stimulating effects. Historically used for medical and recreational purposes, cannabis was widely prohibited during the twentieth century, contributing to the growth of illicit markets. While generally considered lower risk than other drugs, chronic use can lead to psychological dependence and mental health disorders. In recent years, several states have legalized or decriminalized cannabis, reshaping both legal and illegal markets (UNODC, 2025).

## Dimensions of the Topic

### Humanity and Drug Consumption

Human societies have interacted with psychoactive substances throughout history, as many drugs occur naturally in plants and fungi. Archaeological evidence shows early cultivation and use of opium, coca leaves, and cannabis as early as 3000 BCE. Cultural norms strongly influence patterns of consumption; for example, the Inca civilization restricted coca use to elites, while opium spread widely through trade and military expansion, including during the campaigns of Alexander the Great (UNODC, 2009).

### Historical Context and Drug Control

Efforts to regulate drugs at the international level intensified during the twentieth century, particularly following the Opium Wars in China. These conflicts highlighted the geopolitical and economic dimensions of drug trade and addiction. The modern international drug control system is primarily based on three conventions adopted in 1961, 1971, and 1988, which established global scheduling systems and institutional frameworks for enforcement (UNODC, 1961; UNODC, 1971; UNODC, 1988).

### Cultural Aspects

Drugs have historically played roles in religious rituals, medicine, and social cohesion. Cultural acceptance or rejection of substances often translates into legal norms and enforcement practices. Understanding cultural contexts is therefore essential for designing effective and legitimate drug policies (UNODC, 2009).

## Drugs and Society

### Medical and Public Health Aspects

Drug consumption imposes significant burdens on public health systems, including treatment of addiction, management of overdoses, and long-term care for chronic conditions. Regions experiencing drug epidemics often face reduced life expectancy and increased pressure on healthcare infrastructure (UNODC, 2025).

## Economic Aspects

Illicit drug markets are driven by demand generated through addiction. While many drugs originate in legitimate medical contexts, legal supply chains can be exploited for diversion into illegal markets. In addition, gray markets emerge where new synthetic substances exploit regulatory loopholes. Illicit markets generate enormous profits, which are laundered through complex financial systems and reinvested into criminal infrastructure, corruption, and violence (UNODC, 2009).

## Social and Environmental Costs

Drug trafficking contributes to violence, social inequality, and the erosion of trust in public institutions. Environmentally, drug production often involves deforestation, pollution from chemical waste, and increased carbon emissions, particularly in remote cultivation areas (UNODC, 2025).

## Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking

### Legal Approaches and Prohibition

Historical experiences with prohibition, such as alcohol prohibition in the United States, illustrate the risk of creating lucrative black markets. While prohibition remains a central pillar of global drug control, its effectiveness is increasingly questioned, particularly regarding low-risk substances and personal consumption (UNODC, 2009).

### Law Enforcement Challenges

Globalization and technological advances have enabled traffickers to scale operations rapidly, often outpacing law enforcement capabilities. Criminal networks adapt quickly, treating seizures as operational costs. Effective responses require significant resources, specialized training, and cross-border cooperation. Over-criminalization of users may divert resources away from dismantling trafficking networks and can exacerbate social harm (UNODC, 2025).

### Corruption and State Capture

The financial power of drug trafficking organizations enables corruption and, in extreme cases, the subversion of state institutions. In some contexts, drug production and trafficking have become intertwined with state actors, undermining governance and the rule of law (UNODC, 2025).

## International Cooperation

### Role of the CCPCJ

The CCPCJ acts as a governing body for UNODC and plays a central role in shaping international crime prevention policies. Established under UN General Assembly resolution 61/252, the Commission facilitates coordination, norm-setting, and information exchange among member states (UN General Assembly, 2006).

## Key International Actors

Effective international cooperation against illicit drug trafficking relies on a complex network of global, regional, and national actors. These actors differ in mandate, capacity, and operational focus, yet their coordination is essential to addressing the transnational nature of drug markets. At the center of this architecture stands the United Nations, supported by specialized agencies, law enforcement cooperation mechanisms, judicial bodies, financial oversight institutions, and regional organizations (UNODC, 2009; UNODC, 2025).

### United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is the primary international entity responsible for addressing illicit drug trafficking. Established in 1997, UNODC serves as the guardian of the international drug control conventions and provides policy guidance, research, and technical assistance to member states. Its mandate



encompasses drug control, transnational organized crime, corruption, terrorism prevention, and criminal justice reform (UNODC, 2009).

UNODC's work on drug trafficking is structured around three core pillars: normative support, research and analysis, and capacity-building. Normatively, UNODC assists states in implementing the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. This includes legislative assistance, treaty interpretation, and support for national drug control strategies aligned with international law (UNODC, 1961; UNODC, 1971; UNODC, 1988).

In terms of research, UNODC produces the annual *World Drug Report*, which provides comprehensive global data on drug production, trafficking routes, consumption trends, and emerging substances. These reports are widely used by policymakers to assess risks and design evidence-based responses. UNODC also conducts thematic and regional threat assessments that analyze evolving criminal dynamics and the structure of transnational trafficking networks (UNODC, 2025).

At the operational level, UNODC supports law enforcement agencies, customs authorities, prosecutors, and judicial institutions through training programs, technology transfer, and advisory services. This includes assistance in controlled deliveries, precursor chemical monitoring, forensic analysis, and border management. In recent years, UNODC has increasingly emphasized balanced approaches that integrate law enforcement with public health, development, and human rights considerations, reflecting broader debates on the effectiveness of purely punitive drug control strategies (UNODC, 2025).

### Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)

The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) is the principal policymaking body of the United Nations in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. As a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the CCPCJ provides strategic direction to UNODC and facilitates dialogue among member states on emerging crime challenges, including illicit drug trafficking (UN General Assembly, 2006).

The CCPCJ plays a critical role in fostering international cooperation by promoting best practices, encouraging the harmonization of legal frameworks, and facilitating information exchange. While it does not engage in operational enforcement, its resolutions and policy recommendations influence national legislation, bilateral agreements, and regional cooperation mechanisms. The Commission also serves as a forum for addressing cross-cutting issues such as corruption, trafficking in persons, cybercrime, and the links between organized crime and terrorism, all of which intersect with drug trafficking dynamics (UN General Assembly, 2006; UNODC, 2025).

### Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is the central policy-making body of the United Nations drug control system. Its primary responsibility lies in overseeing the implementation of international drug conventions and deciding on the scheduling of substances under international control. Acting on recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO), the CND determines whether substances should be added, removed, or rescheduled based on their medical value and potential for abuse (UNODC, 2009).

While the CND focuses primarily on regulatory and health-related dimensions of drug policy, its decisions have direct implications for illicit drug trafficking by shaping the global legal status of substances. Effective coordination between the CND and the CCPCJ is therefore essential to ensure coherence between public health objectives and criminal justice responses within the broader UN drug control framework (UNODC, 2009; UNODC, 2025).

### International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) plays a vital role in facilitating transnational police cooperation against drug trafficking. Rather than acting as a supranational police force, INTERPOL functions as a coordination and intelligence-sharing platform connecting law enforcement agencies in 195 member countries. It

provides secure communication systems, criminal databases, and analytical support to enhance cross-border cooperation (INTERPOL, n.d.).

INTERPOL supports joint operations targeting drug trafficking networks, particularly those operating across multiple jurisdictions. Its tools include notices for wanted persons, intelligence assessments on trafficking routes, and support for asset tracing and network analysis. By focusing on the organizational structures of criminal groups rather than individual offenders, INTERPOL complements national enforcement efforts and strengthens collective responses to transnational drug crime (INTERPOL, n.d.; UNODC, 2025).

### World Customs Organization (WCO)

The World Customs Organization (WCO) plays a crucial role in combating drug trafficking at borders, where a significant proportion of illicit drugs are intercepted. Given the extensive use of maritime containers, air cargo, and land crossings by traffickers, customs authorities are often the first line of defense. The WCO provides technical standards, risk-management tools, and training aimed at strengthening customs enforcement capabilities (UNODC, 2025).

Through initiatives such as the Container Control Programme, jointly implemented with UNODC, the WCO promotes intelligence-led inspections, targeted profiling, and enhanced cooperation between customs, police, and port authorities. These measures are particularly important in preventing the exploitation of global trade and logistics systems by organized criminal networks (UNODC, 2025).

### Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Financial Institutions

Illicit drug trafficking generates vast financial flows that must be laundered to enter the legal economy. International efforts to combat money laundering and disrupt criminal finances are therefore central to undermining drug trafficking organizations. UNODC analyses emphasize that financial investigations, asset tracing, and international cooperation on illicit financial flows are among the most effective tools for weakening organized crime (UNODC, 2009; UNODC, 2025).

Banks, financial intelligence units (FIUs), and regulatory authorities play an increasingly important role in identifying suspicious transactions, freezing assets, and facilitating cross-border cooperation on financial investigations. Asset seizure and recovery are now recognized not only as enforcement tools but also as mechanisms for reinvesting resources into prevention, treatment, and development programs, thereby addressing the broader social impacts of drug trafficking (UNODC, 2025).

### Regional Organizations and Mechanisms

Regional organizations complement global efforts by addressing region-specific trafficking dynamics and facilitating cooperation among neighboring states. In Europe, agencies such as Europol and Eurojust support joint investigations and judicial cooperation, while in the Americas, regional mechanisms promote coordinated drug control strategies. In Africa, subregional organizations address trafficking linked to instability, weak border control, and limited institutional capacity (UNODC, 2025).

These regional frameworks allow for tailored responses that account for geographic, political, and socioeconomic conditions, while reinforcing global norms established under the UN drug control system. Their role is particularly important in bridging the gap between international standards and national implementation (UNODC, 2025).

### Current Focus of Action

In recent years, international efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking have undergone significant evolution. While enforcement remains a central component, there is increasing recognition that purely punitive approaches are insufficient to address the complexity of modern drug markets. The current focus of action reflects a shift toward

integrated, evidence-based, and cooperative strategies that combine security, public health, and development perspectives (UNODC, 2025).

## Addressing Transnational Organized Crime Networks

A primary priority of the international community is the dismantling of transnational organized crime networks rather than the exclusive targeting of individual actors. Drug trafficking organizations have become increasingly adaptive, decentralized, and technologically sophisticated, exploiting legal trade routes, digital communication platforms, and financial systems to evade detection (UNODC, 2025).

As a result, international cooperation increasingly emphasizes intelligence-sharing, joint investigations, and coordinated operations. Multilateral task forces, controlled deliveries, and shared databases are used to map trafficking networks and identify key nodes, including financiers, logistics coordinators, and corrupt intermediaries, thereby enhancing the strategic impact of enforcement actions (UNODC, 2025).

## Strengthening Legal Harmonization and Judicial Cooperation

Differences in national legislation continue to pose significant obstacles to effective international cooperation. Variations in drug classification, sentencing frameworks, and evidentiary standards can hinder extradition, mutual legal assistance, and joint prosecutions, allowing traffickers to exploit jurisdictional gaps (UNODC, 2009).

Current international efforts therefore prioritize legal harmonization through the implementation of existing drug control conventions and the strengthening of bilateral and regional agreements. Judicial cooperation mechanisms, including extradition treaties and mutual legal assistance frameworks, are being reinforced to ensure that traffickers cannot evade accountability by operating across borders (UNODC, 2009; UNODC, 2025).

## Combating Corruption and Financial Flows

The infiltration of state institutions by drug trafficking organizations remains a major concern for the international community. Corruption undermines law enforcement effectiveness, weakens judicial systems, and erodes public trust in public institutions, thereby facilitating the continued operation of illicit drug markets (UNODC, 2025).

In parallel, disrupting illicit financial flows has emerged as a strategic priority. International actors increasingly focus on money laundering networks, shell companies, and offshore financial structures to deprive criminal organizations of their profits. Asset seizure and recovery are now widely recognized as essential components of comprehensive drug control strategies (UNODC, 2009; UNODC, 2025).

## Integrating Public Health and Prevention Approaches

Recent UNODC analyses highlight the growing importance of prevention, treatment, and harm-reduction strategies in addressing drug trafficking. Overdose crises, particularly those involving synthetic opioids, have demonstrated the limitations of enforcement-only responses and underscored the need for demand-reduction measures (UNODC, 2025).

International cooperation increasingly integrates public health perspectives by expanding access to treatment for substance use disorders, improving data collection on drug-related health outcomes, and promoting evidence-based prevention programs. These approaches aim to reduce demand and, in turn, weaken the economic foundations of illicit drug markets (UNODC, 2025).

## Addressing Socioeconomic and Environmental Drivers

Drug trafficking is closely linked to poverty, limited economic opportunity, and weak governance structures. In cultivation regions, farmers often rely on illicit crops due to a lack of access to markets, infrastructure, and alternative livelihoods. Current international strategies therefore emphasize alternative development programs that promote sustainable agriculture, education, and rural development (UNODC, 2009; UNODC, 2025).



Environmental harm associated with illicit drug production, including deforestation and chemical pollution, has also gained increased attention. International actors are beginning to integrate environmental protection into drug control strategies, recognizing the long-term ecological consequences of illicit economies and their impact on sustainable development (UNODC, 2025).

## Responding to Emerging Trends and Synthetic Drugs

The rapid emergence of synthetic drugs represents one of the most pressing challenges for international cooperation. Unlike plant-based substances, synthetic drugs can be produced in virtually any location with access to precursor chemicals and basic laboratory equipment, complicating traditional supply-reduction strategies (UNODC, 2025).

Current efforts focus on early warning systems, monitoring of precursor chemicals, and rapid international scheduling of new substances. Cooperation with the private sector, including chemical manufacturers and online platforms, is increasingly recognized as essential to addressing the evolving threat posed by synthetic drug markets (UNODC, 2025).

## Concluding Remarks

Illicit drug trafficking remains a complex, multifaceted global challenge that cannot be addressed by isolated national efforts. Strengthening international cooperation, balancing enforcement with public health approaches, and adapting legal frameworks to evolving drug markets are essential steps toward more effective and sustainable solutions.

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## Disclaimer

This study guide is intended to provide an introductory overview of the topics discussed and to support delegates in their preparation. It does not claim to be comprehensive or definitive.

While every effort has been made to rely on reputable sources, the issues addressed are complex, dynamic, and shaped by diverse political, legal, and social contexts. Delegates are therefore encouraged to engage critically with the material, conduct further independent research, and consult additional sources.

This guide should be understood as a starting point for analysis and debate, rather than a final conclusion.