



Special Guest Articles

Pakistan-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): A Lasting Partnership

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Established in 1977 and headquartered in Vienna, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is the main UN body on matters related to the global fight against drugs and transnational organized crime. With thematic areas ranging from corruption to cybercrime and drug trafficking to money laundering and terrorism, UNODC serves as a central hub for promoting international collaboration to combat these challenges. UNODC assists UN membership, inter alia, through its research and analytical work in relation to various aspects of drugs, crime, and terrorism prevention, providing normative support and technical advice and undertaking capacity-building initiatives at global, regional and national levels.

UNODC also has a critical role in its capacity as Secretariat of the two important functional Commissions of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), namely the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). The Office maintains a field presence in different regions of the world, including in Islamabad. UNODC also serves as Secretariat to the two international legal instruments in the area of corruption and transnational organized crime, namely the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

UNODC and Pakistan

Pakistan's collaboration with the UNODC is firmly grounded in its commitment to international conventions and agreements related to crime prevention, drug control, and terrorism. The establishment of UNODC and its mandate to assist member states in combating transnational challenges provided a framework for joint efforts. Pakistan's commitment to addressing these issues through international cooperation set the stage for fruitful collaboration with UNODC.

Pakistan, being situated at a crossroads of regional trade routes, has faced significant challenges in combating transnational crimes, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, and terrorism. Pakistan actively engages with UNODC to strengthen its institutional capacity, enhance law enforcement capabilities, and address the root causes of these challenges. Pakistan is a party to the three UN Conventions on Drugs, UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) as well as the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). These Conventions provide the legal framework for international cooperation in addressing these transnational challenges. The collaboration with UNODC allows Pakistan to access technical assistance, expertise, and resources necessary to effectively implement these conventions at the national level.

UNODC has a dedicated Country Office in Islamabad, which is considered to be one of its main field offices both in terms of human and financial resources. Up until 2010, UNODC's capacity-building work in Pakistan was project-based. Since 2010, that work has been consolidated under a comprehensive approach and framework of the Country Programme. The first UNODC Country Programme for Pakistan was launched for the period 2011-2016.

In December 2016, Pakistan and UNODC signed the second UNODC Country

Programme-II for the period 2016-19, with an estimated budget of around US\$ 75 million. Pakistan has recently signed the third Country Programme for the period 2022-2025. In line with UNODC Strategy 2021-2025, Country Programme-III is composed of 4 interlinked pillars, which are focused on illicit trafficking and border management; criminal justice system and legal reforms; and drug demand reduction, prevention, and countering terrorism. The Country Programme-III localizes the UNODC Strategy 2021-2025 to the needs and priorities of the Government of Pakistan.

At the regional level, Pakistan is part of the UNODC's Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries for the period 2022-2025. The Regional Programme comprises of eight member countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The UNODC Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries is UNODC's key mechanism to support the countries of West and Central Asia to develop regional and international joint responses to counter the harmful impact of illicit narcotic trafficking and transnational organized crime on security, governance and social and economic development.

Focused Areas of Cooperation:

The collaboration between UNODC and Pakistan has been instrumental in addressing transnational challenges effectively, aligning with UNODC's comprehensive strategy for the years 2021-2025. Through capacity-building initiatives, legislative reforms, and technical assistance, UNODC has played a vital role in strengthening Pakistan's criminal justice system, enhancing its ability to combat transnational crime, and promoting justice, security, and sustainable development. This collaborative effort has also facilitated the development and implementation of specialized training programmes for law enforcement agencies, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to tackle emerging challenges. By working together, UNODC and Pakistan are making significant strides in their shared commitment to combating transnational crime and creating a safer and more just society.

World Drug Problem

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is the premier UN/inter-governmental body to review and analyze the global drug situation. It has 53 member states that are elected by ECOSOC. Pakistan is currently a member of the Commission for the term expiring in December 2023. The Commission holds an annual session in Vienna to take stock of recent developments in the area of counter-narcotics and adopts a range of decisions and resolutions.

The work of the CND is guided by three key international conventions: the 1961 Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. These conventions aim to strike a delicate balance between ensuring the availability of drugs for medical use and preventing their misuse. The CND implements a three-pronged approach of prevention, treatment, and access, emphasizing evidence-based

strategies for drug prevention and providing healthcare, social protection, and rehabilitation services to individuals with drug use disorders. Additionally, the agency focuses on facilitating controlled drug access for medical purposes while preventing diversion.

Pakistan's strategic geographic location makes it a critical transit and destination point for drug trafficking. UNODC has been instrumental in supporting Pakistan's efforts to combat drug trafficking through various initiatives. UNODC has recently implemented the first phase of the maritime project which improved multi-agency cooperation between Customs, Coast Guards and ANF to identify and detect drug trafficking attempts through maritime routes. Furthermore, UNODC's support in implementing drug demand reduction programmes has contributed to addressing the root causes of drug abuse and addiction in Pakistan.

In collaboration with UNODC, Pakistan has strengthened its border control mechanisms, implementing advanced technologies and training programmes to detect and intercept drug shipments. The joint efforts have resulted in successful drug seizures, dismantling of trafficking networks, and disruption of drug production and distribution channels. The cooperation also extends to addressing precursor chemicals used in drug manufacturing, as UNODC has provided technical assistance to enhance Pakistan's capacity to monitor and control the illicit trade of these substances. To effectively monitor the import, distribution and use of chemical precursors a digital "Precursor Management System" was designed and launched together with the Ministry of Narcotics Control earlier in 2023. Presently, a National Drug Survey is underway "in close coordination between the Ministry of Narcotics Control, Health and UNODC" to assess drug abuse throughout the country and findings are expected to be published by the end of the year.

Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) acts as the principal policymaking body of the United Nations in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. CCPCJ's mandates and priorities include improving international action to combat national and transnational crime and the efficiency and fairness of criminal justice administration systems. The CCPCJ also offers Member States a forum for exchanging expertise, experience and information in order to develop national and international strategies, and to identify priorities for combating crime. Pakistan is currently a member of the CCPCJ for the term expiring in December 2024.

CCPCJ holds Annual Session in Vienna to take stock of issues related to trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, firearms, cybercrime, technical assistance in implementing terrorism-related international instruments, youth crime prevention, wildlife crime, legal aid, as well as crime prevention and criminal justice.

In the context of international cooperation to address crime, the forum of United Nations Crime Congress holds a special significance. The Crime Congress takes place every five years. The last one (14th) UN Crime Congress took place in 2020 in Japan and

the next ones scheduled to be held in UAE in 2026. The CCPCJ is the preparatory body to the United Nations Crime Congresses. Declarations adopted by the Congresses are transmitted through the CCPCJ and the ECOSOC to the UN General Assembly for endorsement.

Pakistan and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have forged a robust partnership in the realm of crime prevention and criminal justice. Recognizing the significance of effective crime prevention strategies and a fair criminal justice system, UNODC has collaborated extensively to enhance Pakistan's capacity to combat crime and ensure access to justice for all.

Under the thematic area of crime prevention, UNODC has supported Pakistan in developing and implementing comprehensive crime prevention frameworks. This includes the establishment of community-oriented policing initiatives, the promotion of restorative justice practices, and the implementation of crime prevention programmes targeting at-risk groups, such as youth. Through technical assistance, training programmes, and knowledge sharing, UNODC has assisted Pakistan in strengthening its crime prevention efforts, addressing the root causes of criminal behavior, and fostering community resilience against crime.

In the domain of criminal justice, Pakistan and UNODC have collaborated to improve the effectiveness, fairness, and efficiency of the criminal justice system. UNODC has provided assistance in the development and reform of legislation, policies, and procedures, ensuring alignment with international standards and human rights principles. This cooperation has also focused on enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, judges, and other relevant stakeholders through specialized training programmes and the exchange of best practices. Another example of cooperation between Pakistan and UNODC, in this area include digitalization of prisoners records through the Prison Management Information System (PMIS) in provinces, establishing close to 60 eLearning centers across the country for law enforcement and criminal justice officials to access over 100 self-learning courses.

Organized Crime

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), along with its three Protocols, serves as a crucial international legal instrument in the prevention and combat of diverse criminal activities. This Convention, with its broad ratification, stands as a primary global mechanism to address a wide spectrum of illicit conduct, including human trafficking, migrant smuggling, money laundering, and illicit firearms manufacturing and trafficking. Overseeing efforts in this domain, the Conference of the State Parties (COSP) plays a critical role by facilitating meetings and discussions focused on specific thematic areas related to the fight against organized crime.

Collaboration between UNODC and Pakistan in combating organized crime has been a priority. UNODC has assisted Pakistan in strengthening its legal frameworks, establishing specialized units, and enhancing investigative techniques to disrupt

criminal networks. Pakistan, in recent years, has increased its engagement with UNTOC-related processes. For instance, the relevant stakeholders worked together with UNODC experts to improve the legislative response to Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and Smuggling of Migrants (SOM), which resulted in the passing of two new laws in 2018 i.e. the Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act and Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act. These two legislations are in line with international standards and are based on the United Nations model laws. These laws impose long imprisonment terms and substantial fines for traffickers, smugglers and their accomplices. One of the most important aspects of "The Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act, 2018" is the non-criminalization of smuggled migrants, which shows the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to ensure the protection of human rights of victims trapped by unscrupulous migrant smugglers.

Both laws have been commended as model laws for countries to replicate for the implementation of the Protocols within domestic legal structures, which laid down the basework for Pakistan to accede to the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Protocol in November 2022. Deliberations to join the Protocol on Smuggling of Migrants continue.

Pakistan has also been an active participant in the deliberations within the ambit of the Conference on Parties (COP) as well as in the Working Groups. Within the Review Mechanism, Pakistan was one of the 62 countries selected in the first group drawn in 2021 for the first review cluster.

The Government of Pakistan undertook the following steps to ensure the implementation of the UNTOC Review Mechanism

- Appointment of a National Focal Person to oversee and implement the UNTOC Review Process
- Formulation of a Review Team consisting of Focal Persons with relevant expertise from Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Law & Justice and Narcotics Control as well as from specialized agencies including Federal Investigation Agency (for TIP, SoM, Cybercrime and AML), National Accountability Bureau (Anti-Corruption, AML), Anti-Narcotics Force (Drugs and narcotics) and Financial Management Unit (Financial intelligence and suspicious transaction reporting)
- Establishment of the UNTOC Review Secretariat at the National Police Bureau under the Ministry of Interior to facilitate coordination between relevant Ministries and law enforcement agencies at federal and provincial levels
- Facilitating engagement with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) through a national NGO initiative, National Initiative Against Organized Crime (NIOC)

Pakistan is also the first country in Asia, and the second in the world after Mexico, to participate in UNODC's Pilot Initiative to engage non-governmental stakeholders in the UNTOC Review Process for a broader, more comprehensive national review outcome.

Corruption and Economic Crimes

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is a globally applicable instrument that plays a crucial role in the battle against corruption. Guiding and directing anti-corruption efforts, the Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) assumes a pivotal role in the implementation of UNCAC. This body convenes regular intersessional meetings to assess the progress and status of the Convention's implementation. Pakistan actively participates as a dedicated Member State in the processes of UNCAC. Pakistan is currently serving as Vice President of UNCAC CoSP.

UNODC has supported Pakistan's anti-money laundering and anti-corruption efforts, facilitating the recovery of illicit assets and promoting good governance practices. The joint efforts have resulted in notable successes, including the identification and seizure of illicit proceeds, prosecution of high-profile corruption cases, and the establishment of anti-corruption bodies. UNODC's technical assistance has helped Pakistan improve its capacity for financial investigations, asset recovery, and international cooperation in combating money laundering and corruption.

Terrorism

UNODC focuses on developing comprehensive programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism, acknowledging the importance of addressing root causes and promoting inclusive societies resilient to radicalization. UNODC supports Member States to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions ensuring complementarity and coordination of efforts with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other entities of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. It provides support to strengthen laws, institutional capacities and interagency and cross-border cooperation and implementation of strategies and plans of action to prevent and counter terrorism.

UNODC has provided technical assistance and capacity building programmes to enhance Pakistan's counterterrorism capabilities. Information sharing and exchange of best practices have played a crucial role in improving intelligence coordination and strengthening border management.

In collaboration with UNODC, Pakistan has undertaken comprehensive measures to strengthen its legal frameworks, intelligence sharing mechanisms, and law enforcement capabilities. Community-based initiatives, supported by UNODC, have focused on promoting international cooperation especially facilitating evidence collection from Private Service providers in across border terrorism cases.

Countering Misuse of Information and Communication Technologies for Criminal Purposes

Through its resolution 74/247, the General Assembly established an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental committee (AHC) of experts, to elaborate a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of information and communications

technologies for criminal purposes, taking into full consideration existing international instruments and regional instruments. Originally scheduled for August 2020, the organizational session was rescheduled to May 10-12, 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as decided in resolutions 74/567 and 75/555.

On 26 May 2021, the General Assembly adopted resolution 75/282 titled "Countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes." The resolution outlined that the Ad Hoc Committee would hold at least six sessions, each spanning 10 days, beginning in January 2022. A concluding session in New York is planned, aiming to present a draft convention to the seventy-eighth General Assembly session.

The AHC has held its organizational session and five formal sessions, in New York and Vienna, respectively. Central discussions among Member States revolve around the acceptance of a global convention that surpasses the existing Budapest Convention, which has been ratified by 68 countries as ratified parties. The Budapest Convention is limited to nine cyber-dependent crimes and does not address cyber-enabled crimes. This divergence has led the Budapest Convention supporters to promote a narrower approach, while countries like Pakistan and our like-minded countries advocate for a more comprehensive approach.

Key topics of debate include the terminology for the convention, its scope, incorporation of cyber-enabled crimes, considerations for human rights like freedom of expression and personal liberties, gender perspectives, human rights safeguards, jurisdiction over offenses, international cooperation in sharing electronic evidence, investigative methods such as real-time data collection, cooperation with service providers, technology transfer to enhance capacities in developing nations, entry into force timeframe, and protocols.

Pakistan has actively participated in AHC proceedings. Collaborating with G-77 countries and like-minded countries like Russia, China, India, Iran, Egypt, Cuba, Venezuela, Nigeria, and others, Pakistan is advocating for a broad approach as mandated by resolution 75/282. It supports a Convention with extensive scope, extended electronic evidence storage, provision of equipment for law enforcement, technology transfer, establishing cooperation with service providers, swift entry into force, and three years for additional protocol formulation.

A notable initiative put forward by Pakistan centers on the criminalization of actions such as incitement, xenophobia, Islamophobia, discrimination, and the denigration of religious values, figures, or beliefs. The intention behind this proposal is to draw a clear distinction between personal freedoms and the exercise of freedom of expression, which should not infringe upon the well-being of fellow human beings. This approach aligns with the principles emphasized in various Human Rights Conventions, promoting a fair and responsible standpoint.

Similarly, in keeping with the principles established in existing anti-crime conventions, Pakistan and like-minded nations oppose the inclusion of human rights and gender perspectives within the proposed convention. They contend that the establishment of

safeguards should be a matter of domestic legislation and that upholding the sovereignty of individual States is essential in determining jurisdiction over transnational offenses. This stance seeks to maintain a careful balance between international cooperation and the sovereignty of individual nations.

The upcoming penultimate session of the Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) is scheduled to convene in New York from August 21 to September 1, 2023. This draft has been prepared on the basis of inputs, written submissions, and discussions that occurred throughout the five preceding sessions along with the existing provisions of international baseline instruments such as UNCAC, UNTOC, and regional conventions such as the Budapest Convention, Arab League Convention, and African Malabo Convention.

New Initiatives

The UNODC has undertaken several new initiatives to address emerging challenges and strengthen its impact in key areas.

Data-Driven Approach to Measure Corruption:

UNODC is introducing a new initiative aligned with the principles of the UNCAC. This initiative focuses on adopting data-driven approaches to measure corruption, moving away from perception-based indexing. By leveraging data and evidence-based methodologies, UNODC aims to enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of measuring corruption, enabling more targeted interventions and policy responses.

In the two meetings held to date, Pakistan has expressed support for this initiative. However, Pakistan has also emphasized that the criteria for measuring corruption should not be geared toward country rankings or assigning blame or shame. Instead, it should serve to assist Member States in comprehending the prevalence of corruption and adopting necessary actions for its elimination. Additionally, Pakistan has advocated for capacity building in this domain, underscoring the need to enhance capabilities to effectively combat corruption.

Innovative Initiatives and Holistic Work:

UNODC is engaged in various innovative initiatives to address a wide range of issues. These include the development of a modern E-learning hub offering free courses for individuals of all age groups, promoting knowledge dissemination and capacity building. The organization's work spans multiple areas, such as promoting gender equality, advancing forensics capabilities, safeguarding intellectual property rights, providing legal tools and assistance, and conducting research in relevant fields. UNODC actively collects data and evaluates the impact of corruption and malpractices on global crises, including the opioid crisis, HIV/AIDS, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Through targeted campaigns, UNODC addresses critical issues such as drug abuse, anti-corruption measures, human trafficking, women's rights, and the protection of cultural property. Additionally, the organization emphasizes alternative development approaches to ensure equitable distribution of crops, technology, and environmental knowledge among

member states. Furthermore, UNODC offers collective border management and technical assistance to enhance the capacities of member states in effectively managing their borders and addressing transnational challenges.

Conclusion:

UNODC has a pivotal role in addressing the challenges of drugs, organized crime, corruption, terrorism, and other transnational threats. Pakistan plays an active role in the collective efforts of UNODC. By actively participating in international forums, advocating for issues related to drug prevention, countering organized crime, and combating corruption, Pakistan showcases its commitment to fortifying its domestic legal framework and enhancing law enforcement capabilities. Through collaborative initiatives with UNODC, such as public awareness campaigns, community-based interventions, and educational programmes, Pakistan reinforces its dedication to the fight against drugs and contributes to regional and international knowledge sharing. Together with UNODC and other member states, Pakistan strives to create a safer world by addressing transnational challenges and fostering global cooperation. By harnessing the power of partnership, UNODC and Pakistan exemplify the spirit of international solidarity, working towards a shared vision of a safer and more promising future for all.
