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World crime trends and responses: integration and coordination of efforts by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and by Member States in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note contains a summary of the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the area of crime data collection, with particular reference to the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems. Activities carried out in 2006 in the area of assessment of transnational organized crime, trafficking in persons and corruption are also presented.

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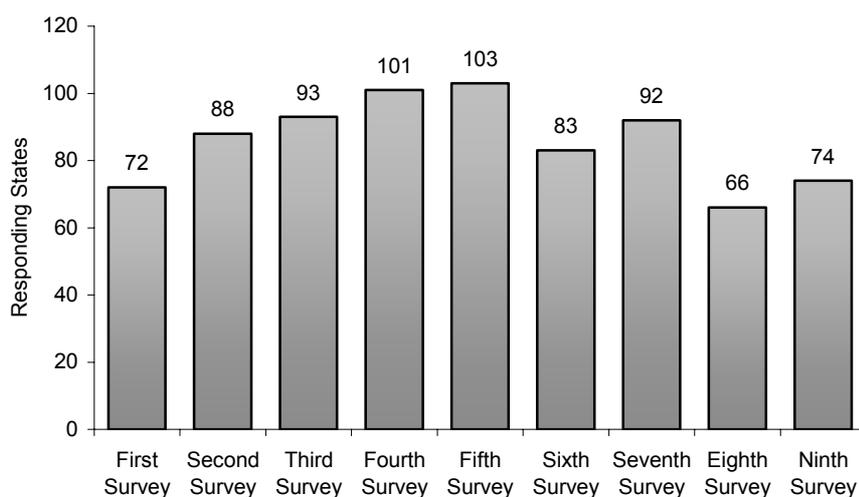
I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1984/48 and 1990/18, collects crime statistics through the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems. On the basis of those statistics, reports on the state of crime and justice worldwide (A/CONF.187/5 and A/CONF.203/3) have been prepared on a regular basis.

2. The United Nations Survey is currently repeated every two years. The most recent Survey, the Ninth United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, was carried out in the period 2005-2006 and provided information on the period 2003-2004. Replies to the questionnaire for the Ninth Survey were received from 74 States, or less than 40 per cent of member States. Although this represents an improvement over the Eighth Survey (see figure I), the response rate is insufficient for building evidence-based assessments, monitoring and developing crime prevention policies at the international level. In particular, information received from developing countries is very poor. This may result in a distorted overall picture of crime trends, which are dominated by those countries better equipped to provide accurate crime and criminal justice information.

Figure I

Number of States responding to the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems



3. During the fifteenth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the representatives of several countries stressed the need for a better response rate to the Survey questionnaire.¹ That may require building relevant

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 10 and corrigendum (E/2006/30 and Corr.1), para. 21.*

capacity and providing specific training on the development of crime and criminal justice statistics by using internationally accepted standards and methods.²

4. In its resolution 2005/23, entitled “Strengthening reporting on crime”, the Economic and Social Council recommended that the Secretary-General convene an open-ended expert group to consider ways and means of improving crime data collection, research and analysis. The meeting was held in Vienna from 8 to 10 February 2006. The meeting was attended by 15 experts from 13 countries; the institutes of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network, the World Health Organization, the European Commission and Interpol were represented by observers.³

5. On the basis of the recommendations of the expert group, UNODC has taken action in the following areas:

(a) Development of a plan to increase the response rate to the United Nations Survey, including analysis of response patterns and a survey of users of the United Nations Survey;⁴

(b) Focused analysis of survey data to provide inputs on crime trends for UNODC studies on drugs and crime;⁵

(c) Identification of core indicators of conventional crime and development of indicators of transnational organized crime, including the development of appropriate definitions for data collection purposes and new indicators for such types of crime;

(d) Revision of the instrument currently used for the collection of data for the United Nations Survey and development of survey instruments, in line with the recommendations of the expert group and follow-up consultations;

(e) Work towards improved dissemination of the results, through the development of an Internet-based tool;⁶

(f) At the request of interested Governments, building capacity for data collection and reporting, including the promotion of surveys on victimization.⁷

6. Efforts were made to join the ongoing methodological work of other United Nations agencies and at the regional level. UNODC and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) jointly published the *Manual for the Measurement of*

² *Manual for the Development of a System of Criminal Justice Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.XVII.6).

³ The report of the meeting (E/CN.15/2006/4) was submitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its 15th session.

⁴ The user survey is under way. The form can be downloaded from the UNODC website (http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime_survey_ninth.html#survey).

⁵ Such as the forthcoming UNODC studies on crime, drugs and development in Central America and the Caribbean and on crime and stability in South-Eastern Europe and affected countries.

⁶ A web-based reporting tool has been developed and is currently being tested within UNODC.

⁷ See, for example, the UNODC project “Collection and analysis of data and trends in drugs, crime and victimization in Africa” (A/60/6 (sect. 34)), approved by the General Assembly for funding from the Development Account in 2006, which is aimed at strengthening the capacity of existing national institutions by training and assisting them in carrying out victim surveys and developing a system for the collection and analysis of data on drugs and crime. The project is a component of the UNODC initiative “Data for Africa”.

Juvenile Justice Indicators.⁸ UNODC and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) joined forces in the development of regional guidelines for surveys on victimization; a task force to develop a manual on victim surveys was established.⁹ UNODC participated in relevant activities of the European Union as a member of the task force of the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) on statistics on crime, criminal justice and victimization and a member of the expert group established by the Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission on gathering comparable information on crime and victimization within the European Union. Finally, UNODC also participated in methodological work of the European Union on the establishment of a template for data collection on violence against minors, including trafficking.¹⁰

II. Transnational organized crime

7. In April 2006, UNODC published the report *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*,¹¹ based on information collected for two years on trafficking in persons. The objectives of the report were to assess available information on routes used for trafficking in persons and to shed light on the characteristics of the victims and perpetrators of such trafficking. The report does not provide information on the extent and severity of such trafficking; it only reflects information reported by intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental sources. Its value as a research tool lies in the fact that it assesses what is reported about trafficking in humans on a global scale.

8. A study on the role of organized crime in the lucrative business of smuggling migrants from Africa into Europe, entitled *Organized Crime and Irregular Migration from Africa to Europe*, was completed in 2006.¹² This study opens with a look at the size of the potential market for organized crime, including estimates of the number of irregular migrants. An overview of the specific routes used by the smugglers includes an analysis of the countries most affected by the phenomenon. The study includes an estimate of the potential turnover of that market.

III. Corruption

9. On the basis of previous surveys and within the framework of a recent cooperation agreement between UNODC and the United Nations Industrial

⁸ Available on the UNODC website (http://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/06-55616_ebook.pdf).

⁹ A Meeting of the Group of Experts on Crime Statistics, organized jointly by UNODC and ECE, was held in Vienna from 25 to 27 January 2006 (ECE/CES/2006/4/Add.3). Preparatory work on the draft manual is being coordinated by UNODC and ECE, in consultation with the Conference of European Statisticians (ECE/CES/2006/2).

¹⁰ This activity was part of the project on the elaboration of a European Union template and collection plan for statistical information and analysis on missing and sexually exploited children and trafficking in human beings (the SIAMSECT project), within the framework of the Daphne programme of the European Commission.

¹¹ Available on the UNODC website (http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking_persons_report_2006-04.html).

¹² Available on the UNODC website (http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Migration_Africa.pdf).

Development Organization, a questionnaire and methodology for international standardized crime and corruption surveys for businesses were developed. The questionnaire covers bribery, corruption, fraud, extortion and several other forms of crime that have an impact on business and industry. Pilot surveys were conducted in Bulgaria and Canada with small sample groups of businesses. The purpose of the pilot surveys was not to produce estimates of prevalence, but only to test the methodology and the questionnaire in different contexts. The results were analysed with a view to further refining the methodology and assessing the average length of interviews. A full-fledged survey was implemented for the first time in Cape Verde in 2006,¹³ using the finalized standard methodology and questionnaire.

10. Further data collection activities have been conducted in the framework of UNODC technical cooperation. In January 2006, UNODC published a technical assessment report entitled *Assessment of the Integrity and Capacity of the Justice System in Three Nigerian States*.¹⁴ A similar report entitled *Assessment of Justice Sector Integrity in Two Indonesian Provinces*, was published in March 2006.¹⁵ The assessments have been conducted through primary data collection by surveying the judiciary, lawyers, prisoners and businesses. The assessments measure the severity and the patterns of respondents' experiences regarding corrupt practices within the courts.

IV. Trends in conventional crime

11. The information available on conventional crime is based on data collected through the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems. Trends observed in selected categories of crime recorded by police in countries that consistently completed the United Nations Survey in the period 1995-2004 are presented in figure II. It should be noted that, due to irregular reporting patterns, the trends shown below refer to a limited number of countries, mostly in Europe and North America. Thus, generalizations about overall crime trends based on such available information may not be accurate.

12. Among the five types of crime considered, only two (robbery and drug-related crime) increased over the period 1995-2004,¹⁶ while three (intentional homicide, house burglary and automobile theft) slightly decreased. A similar pattern was observed in the shorter period 2002-2004, during which trends were relatively stable.

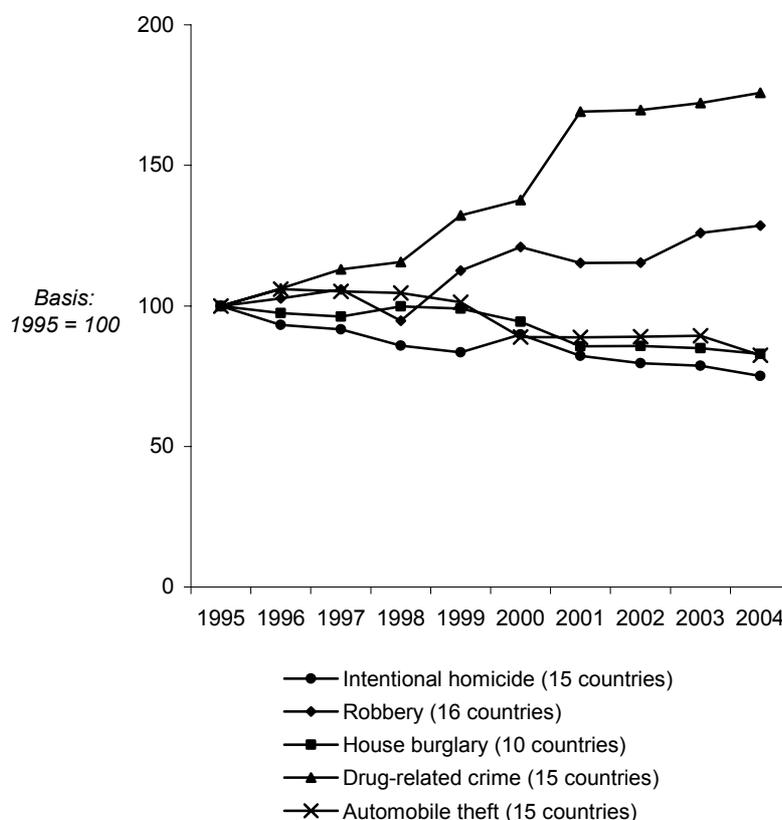
¹³ Within the framework of the project "Strengthening the rule of law in Cape Verde" (CAVE JIMLOC – CPV/S30).

¹⁴ Available on the UNODC website (http://www.unodc.org/pdf/corruption/publications_nigeria_assessment.pdf).

¹⁵ Available on the UNODC website (http://www.unodc.org/pdf/corruption/publications_indonesia_e_assessment.pdf).

¹⁶ Analysis based on data from the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth United Nations Surveys.

Figure II
Trends in selected categories of conventional crime recorded by police in countries consistently reporting such crime, 1995-2004

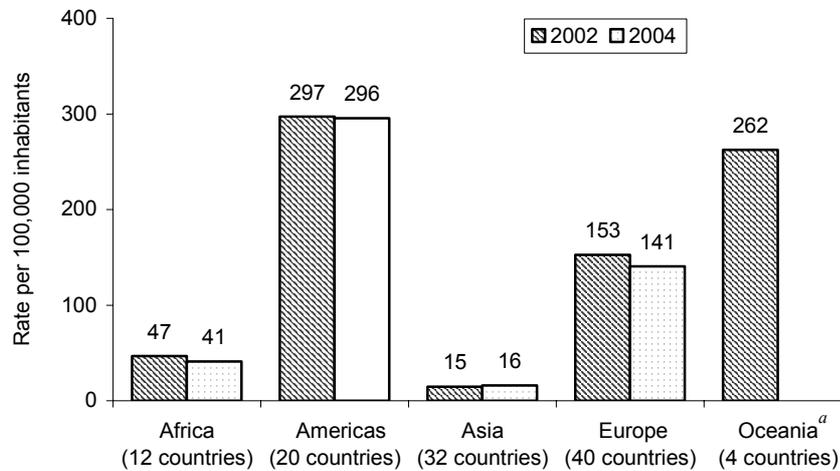


Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

Note: Weighted average of selected categories of conventional crime recorded by police in countries consistently reporting such crime for the entire period 1995-2004, using the questionnaire for the United Nations Survey (basis: 1995 = 100).

13. As regards trends in different regions, after a steep increase between 1998 and 2001, regional averages of police-recorded rates of drug-related crime stabilized in the period 2003-2004, although they remained significantly higher than in the 1990s. Figure III provides a comparison of average regional rates in 2002 and 2004. It should be noted, however, that data may reflect different crime policies in different countries. For example, in several countries, the number of drug-related offences showed either a sharp increase or decrease, depending on relevant changes in drug control policies and law enforcement priorities.

Figure III
Drug-related crime, by region, 2002 and 2004

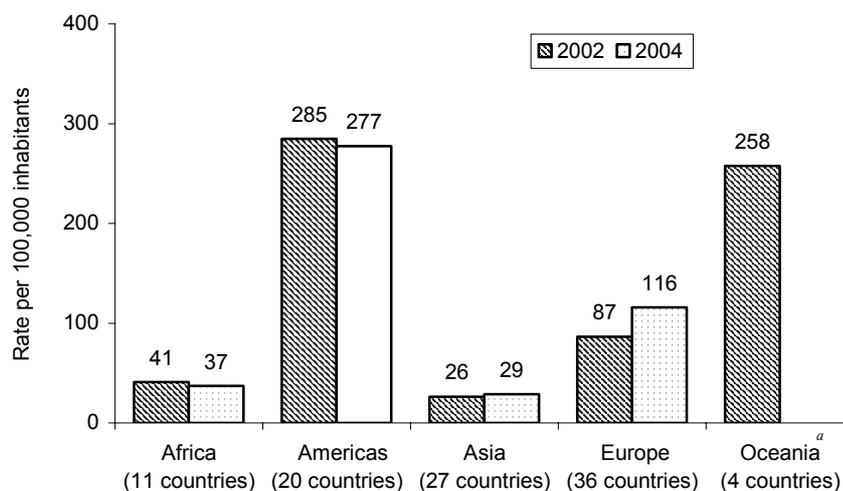


Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

^a No data available for 2004.

14. The number of persons arrested for drug-related crime per 100,000 inhabitants is presented in figure IV. Between 2002 and 2004, a significant increase was observed in Europe, in contrast to the decrease in drug-related crime recorded by police. In Europe, there is a marked difference between the rate of recorded drug-related crime and the rate of relevant arrests, which was much lower in 2002 and tended to increase in 2004. Data may suggest that more effective law enforcement targeting drug-related crime (and probably drug trafficking in particular) may have been in place in several countries in the region during that period. In the other regions, arrest data for 2004 were at the same level as in 2002.

Figure IV
Persons arrested for drug-related crime, by region, 2002 and 2004

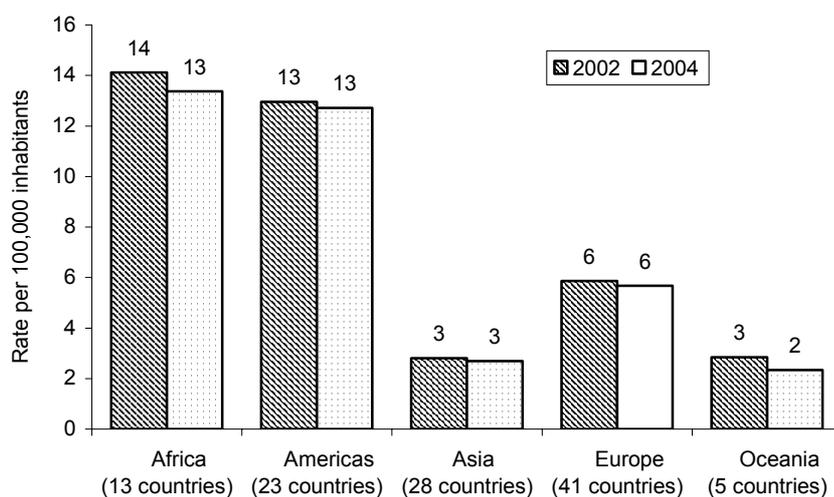


Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

^a No data available for 2004.

15. In all regions, the trend in intentional homicide was stable between 2002 and 2004, as shown in figure V. The overall weighted average for homicide decreased slightly, from 5.1 to 4.9 per 100,000 inhabitants. In Africa and Oceania, lower regional rates were observed with respect to 2002, while rates were stable in all other regions. Homicide trends are an important indicator of safety and development. Although information from developing countries is still insufficient to provide an accurate picture, data for the African region suggest a decreasing trend in the period under review.

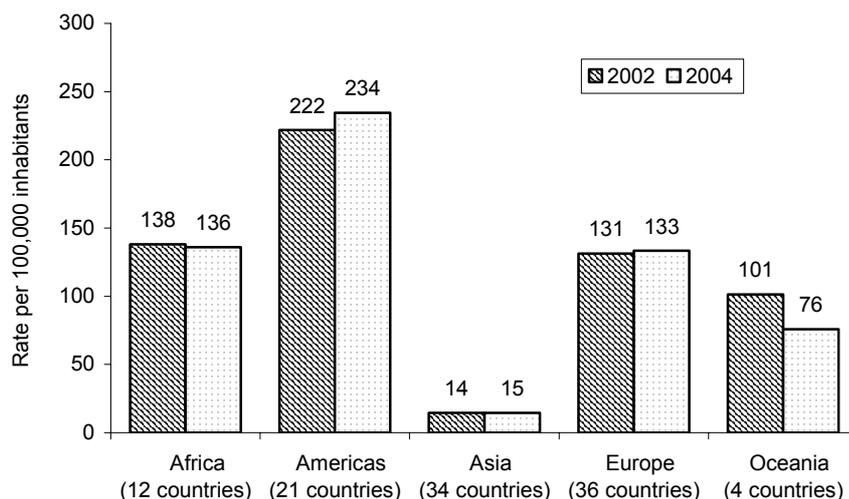
Figure V
Intentional homicide, by region, 2002 and 2004



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

16. Of all the types of crime, theft of property including violence (robbery) was the one for which an increasing trend was reported in the largest number of countries (41). The overall weighted average for police-recorded robbery rose from 66 to 68 per 100,000 inhabitants. As shown in figure VI, regional rates increased in the Americas, Asia and Europe. A sizeable decrease in one country in Oceania resulted in a lower rate in the region as a whole. A slight decrease was also observed in Africa.

Figure VI

Police-recorded robbery, by region, 2002 and 2004

Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

V. Conclusions

17. Crime trends represent a fundamental resource used in assessing safety and security and in determining benchmarks for development. Information from developing countries, which are frequently affected by high crime levels, is still patchy and irregular. Information on trends in transnational organized crime, trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and corruption is still either unavailable or very scarce.

18. Based on the data available for the period 2003-2004, crime levels appeared relatively stable. Over the longer period 1995-2004, trends for individual types of crime showed increases in drug-related crime and robbery. There may be a correlation between those two types of crime and transnational organized crime, which could be studied further using analyses at the regional level.