Economic and Social Council

**Commission on Crime Prevention and
Criminal Justice**
Thirtieth session
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Item 6 (e) of the provisional agenda[*]
**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: other activities in support of the
work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and
Crime, in particular activities of the United
Nations crime prevention and criminal justice
programme network, non-governmental
organizations and other bodies**

Report of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

Note by the Secretary-General

1.   The report of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) was prepared pursuant to a decision of the Board taken at its meeting held virtually on 21 and 22 October 2020 to report to the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The report contains information on the work of, and the results achieved by, the Institute in 2020, in accordance with its statute (Council resolution 1989/56, annex).

2.   The report also contains substantive information on the implementation of the UNICRI Strategic Programme Framework for the period 2019–2022. The Framework was approved by the Board of Trustees and contains six strategic priorities and the tools and approaches used by the Institute to carry out its activities. The Commission is requested to welcome the implementation of the Framework and to invite Member States to cooperate with UNICRI on and make voluntary contributions to various activities for the implementation of the Framework.

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[*] E/CN.15/2021/1.

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Results achieved by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

Report of the Board of Trustees

I. Introduction

1.   The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) was established pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1086 B (XXXIX) of 1965. The Institute is an autonomous institution of the United Nations and is governed by its Board of Trustees, which provides strategic direction and contributes to the setting of priorities. The Board reports periodically to the Economic and Social Council through the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

2.   Within the broad scope of its mandate to develop and implement improved policies in the field of crime prevention and control, the mission of UNICRI is to advance justice and the rule of law in support of peace and sustainable development.

3.   UNICRI works in specialized niches and selected areas within the fields of crime prevention, criminal justice, security governance and the risks and benefits of technological advances. The Institute provides a vital foundation for United Nations policy and operations through its specialized, cutting-edge and action-oriented research, training and capacity-building programmes. The Institute serves as a conduit for channelling innovative ideas from within and outside the United Nations system.

4.   Prompted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UNICRI reinforced its e-learning capacity and expanded its online training programmes. Consequently, the Institute's training programmes, including the Master of Laws in Transnational Crime and Justice, were almost fully transformed for online delivery in 2020, while still maintaining their interdisciplinary and practical approach.

5.   Furthermore, UNICRI adapted its tools and expertise in research, training, capacity-building, technical assistance and policy support in order to address the challenge of new and emerging criminal activities as terrorist, violent extremist and organized criminal groups sought to take advantage of the pandemic.

6.   Moreover, as the pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing vulnerabilities of certain groups, UNICRI placed particular emphasis, in its programmes and activities, on mitigating the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups by enhancing resilience, preventing crime and promoting peaceful, safe and inclusive communities.

7.   The present report of the Board of Trustees contains a summary of the work carried out by UNICRI in 2020, in line with the UNICRI Strategic Programme Framework for the period 2019–2022.

A. Strategic Programme Framework for the period 2019–2022

8.   Through its research, needs assessments and analyses of evolving trends, as well as the feedback received from partners, academics, civil society actors, policymakers and practitioners, UNICRI has identified the following threats and challenges in its Strategic Programme Framework for the period 2019–2022:

    (a)   Radicalization and violent extremism: the lack of context-specific responses, weak criminal justice systems, and gaps in national and transnational cooperation;

    (b)   Transnational organized crime involvement in licit and illicit markets: shadow economies, illicit financial flows and possible links with terrorist networks;

    (c)   Weak security governance, poor rule of law and lack of accountability of institutions in post-conflict areas;

(d)   High-tech security: encompassing global threats and solutions;

(e)   Threats to crowded spaces and vulnerable targets;

(f)   Vulnerabilities to criminal exploitation, gender inequalities and human rights violations against vulnerable populations;

(g)   Emerging trends in crimes having an impact on the environment: illegal extraction, use of and trade in environmental resources and trafficking in hazardous substances.

9.   The Framework contains the following six strategic priorities:

(a)   Preventing and countering violent extremism;

(b)   Countering organized crime and fighting all forms of trafficking and illicit financial flows;

(c)   Reinforcing the rule of law in post-conflict countries;

(d)   Security through research, technology and innovation;

(e)   Threat response and risk mitigation: security governance;

(f)   Preventing crime through the protection and empowerment of vulnerable groups.

10.   The responses to the criminal justice, security and governance issues highlighted within the Framework have been carefully crafted to support and contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNICRI aims to contribute to the achievement of the Goals by assisting intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations with its tools and expertise in research, training delivery, capacity-building, technical assistance and policy support. The priorities of the Institute are aligned in particular with Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels), but they are also linked to several other Goals (2–6, 8, 9, 11, 14 and 15).

B.   Tools and approaches

11.   In 2020, UNICRI continued to develop, test and promote new and innovative measures in the field of criminal justice and policymaking in an effort to build the capacities of Member States to prevent and counter crime. In order to achieve this objective and confront the evolving array of traditional and emerging threats, UNICRI adopted a multi-sectoral and holistic approach, through applied and action-oriented research, the exchange and dissemination of knowledge, the provision of training and technical assistance, and the creation of strong partnerships and policy support.

12.   UNICRI promoted research to expand the knowledge and understanding of problems and tailor appropriate interventions. Specific achievements included the publication of the following nine reports:

(a)   *Many Hands on an Elephant: What Enhances Community Resilience to Radicalization into Violent Extremism? – Findings from the Project on Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism in the Regions of Sahel and Maghreb*;

(b)   *When the Music Stops: The Impact of Terrorism on Malian Youth*;

(c)   *Dynamics of Support and Engagement: Understanding Malian Youths' Attitudes Towards Violent Extremism*;

(d)   *Malicious Uses and Abuses of Artificial Intelligence*;

(e)   "Stop the virus of disinformation: the risk of malicious use of social media during COVID-19 and the technology options to fight it";

(f) *Towards Responsible AI Innovation: Second INTERPOL-UNICRI Report on Artificial Intelligence for Law Enforcement*;

(g) *Special Collection on Artificial Intelligence*;

(h) *COVID-19: The Day We Discovered Our Fragility and Our Strength*;

(i) Summary report on the Institute's virtual meetings, entitled "COVID-19, crime prevention and criminal justice priorities: a spotlight on vulnerable groups".

13. This research provided comparative information on various policy options and their actual or potential success, thus supporting and contributing to an effective programme design and implementation process. While several research reports focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the research carried out by the Institute also supported the formulation of targeted social and criminal policy strategies by exploring how crime and violence hindered development and providing tailor-made analysis for Member States. By disseminating qualitative and quantitative data and analysing trends in crime, the Institute helped Member States to raise awareness of the needs and gaps in criminal justice systems and related policy frameworks.

14. UNICRI training and learning activities actively contributed to the transfer and dissemination of the internal expertise of the Institute acquired through the implementation of projects and programmes under its six strategic priorities. The well-developed in-house capacity of the Institute to design, deliver, manage and evaluate learning activities, together with the wide network of experts and partnerships available, those experts and partnerships being constantly consolidated and expanded, allowed the Institute to organize numerous training activities.

15. Professional training to develop the capacity of judicial, legislative, law enforcement and prison personnel, military personnel, peacekeepers, psychologists, social workers and media professionals was organized under the technical cooperation projects and programmes implemented by UNICRI in pursuance of its strategic priorities. In addition, tailor-made professional training was organized at the request of different organizations with the aim of building or enhancing institutional and individual capacity in areas falling within the mandate and under the strategic priorities of UNICRI.

16. In addition to the delivery of professional training, UNICRI continued to design and implement master's programmes and specialized post-graduate education courses that centred around the UNICRI mandate and focus on crime prevention, criminal justice, security, international criminal law and human rights.

17. In 2019 and 2020, the fourteenth Master of Laws in Transnational Crime and Justice was organized online in cooperation with the University for Peace for a group of 52 students from 19 countries wishing to specialize in the areas of international criminal law, humanitarian law, human rights law and transnational crime. The moot court simulation, which is one of the Master's trademarks and in 2020 was based on the plot of the movie "Eye in the Sky", was also transformed into an online event, with students making their pleadings virtually before of a bench of international judges.

18. Additionally, a number of courses for postgraduate students and professionals were conceived and designed for online delivery, using the dynamic training methodologies developed by UNICRI. This included the implementation of six online specialized courses for young professionals and postgraduate students organized in cooperation with United Nations entities and international universities to disseminate UNICRI knowledge in the areas of migration, human rights, the countering of violent extremism and hate speech, food security and protection of cultural heritage. The lessons learned and best practices identified will be reflected in the courses planned for 2021, with a view to their further improvement.

19. The pool of training experts consisted of UNICRI internal subject-matter experts, as well as academics, practitioners and senior United Nations officials,

ensuring the provision of diverse insights and perspectives. Every year, a number of subject matters linked to organized and transnational crime, including drug trafficking, terrorism, human trafficking, environmental crimes and the rule of law, are taught by staff members of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

20. Applying the findings and lessons learned from its research, UNICRI continued to provide training and on-the-ground practical advice and mentoring in a multitude of highly specialized crime- and justice-related thematic areas. It also advised counterparts on crime- and justice-related issues at both the policy and operational levels, to enable them to respond more effectively to specific challenges.

21. Serving as a platform for consultation and cooperation among Member States, local government institutions, research institutions, international organizations, private entities and civil society, UNICRI played a crucial role in organizing and coordinating efforts to identify innovative ideas and approaches.

22. Thanks to its unique position as a global platform, UNICRI shared with the international community the many good practices and lessons learned through its programmes and activities. The Institute employed various methods to enhance learning and raise awareness in the field of crime and justice, such as the holding and hosting of online international conferences, workshops, specialized courses for practitioners and the annual Master of Laws in Transnational Crime and Justice programme. Furthermore, UNICRI directly supported the capacity development of national stakeholders in the field, while also promoting cooperation and sharing its expertise and international good practices to increase their awareness. Those efforts were strengthened by means of the serial publications of the Institute, including the *Freedom from Fear Magazine* and the policy papers and specialized materials developed as a result of its research projects, training efforts and field activities.

23. The work undertaken by UNICRI in 2020 was funded exclusively from voluntary contributions. Its primary donors were Canada, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the European Union, the Office of Counter-Terrorism of the United Nations, the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, Société Industrielle et Commerciale de Produits Alimentaires (SICPA), 1Qbit, Compagnia di San Paolo and several other private companies, foundations and international organizations.

24. The work of UNICRI had a broad impact at the national, regional and international levels, and a wide range of stakeholders benefited from its technical assistance. Its programme of activities was delivered through its headquarters, in Turin, Italy, and a network of small offices, including liaison offices in Rome and New York, project offices in Brussels and Geneva, the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in the Hague, and the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence in Algiers, Amman, Manila, Nairobi, Rabat, Tashkent and Tbilisi. UNICRI participates in United Nations system coordination mechanisms in the locations in which it has an official presence.

II. Preventing and countering violent extremism

25. Focusing on the Sahel-Maghreb region, UNICRI continued to support initiatives developed by local communities and civil society actors to strengthen community resilience against violent extremism in nine countries. Through its support of those initiatives, UNICRI has collected information and evidenced-based data on the type of strategies and measures that work effectively, at the local level, in terms of building stronger resilience to terrorist radicalization, particularly among young people and other vulnerable groups. The Institute's in-depth and evidence-based research has also demonstrated how the presence of terrorist groups has affected the lives of young

people, and identified variables that merit greater consideration when developing local and national policies and practices to counter violent extremism.

26.   To that end, UNICRI has also contributed to global awareness of the importance of sport and the specific means by which it can and should be used to promote peace, justice and inclusion, as well as a sense of belonging and resilience against violent extremism.

27.   With regard to rehabilitation and reintegration efforts, UNICRI has raised awareness of the risk of radicalization within prison settings and measures to counter this modality of radicalization. In particular, the Institute has developed guidelines to bolster the quality of training for prison staff, with the overall goal of strengthening the management of violent extremist offenders in prison settings.

28.   Moreover, UNICRI has designed and elaborated training activities to disseminate the knowledge acquired through implementation of its projects and programmes on violent extremism. In December 2020, UNICRI delivered an online training course for students of the University of Siena (Italy) focusing on "Understanding and preventing violent extremism: programmes and methods".

A.   Supporting local communities and civil society organizations in preventing and countering violent radicalization and extremist activity

29.   Recognizing the critical role played by communities in combating violent extremism, UNICRI continued to support and implement programmes aimed at preventing and countering radicalization, terrorist recruitment and violent extremism.

30.   Focusing on the Sahel-Maghreb region, UNICRI has piloted and evaluated interventions of a diverse nature, which have been implemented since 2017 by a varied range of grass-roots organizations in both urban and rural communities. The interventions have engaged different actors at risk of radicalization, focusing in particular on young people. By the end of 2020, UNICRI had supported 83 civil society and non-profit organizations in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, the Niger and Tunisia, carrying out more than 500 activities involving over 23,000 participants. Since March 2020, some of the planned field activities have been conducted remotely (for example, training sessions held online and theatre performances recorded and shared on social media).

31.   The Institute's successful approach to preventing and countering violent radicalization relied heavily on civil society organizations' local knowledge to identify grievances at the community level, as well as their ability to craft tailor-made solutions, on the basis of the proven tenet that participatory local solutions have a longer-term impact than solutions coming from outside the community. As a result, UNICRI interventions necessarily varied from one community to the next. Key interventions involved human rights education and non-violent conflict mitigation and management. Other interventions highlighted sub-thematic areas of inclusion, social cohesion, tolerance, active citizen participation and political representation, religious tolerance, women's rights and respect for diversity. UNICRI also assisted civil society actors in the implementation of actions designed to limit the influence of violent extremist ideology and challenge the narratives of extremists by offering positive, practical and realistic alternatives to violence.

32.   The recommendations, findings, success stories and lessons learned from the Institute's work in the Sahel-Maghreb region were published in a final analytical report in 2020.[1] The report included substantive research on the geo-political context

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[1] United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, *Many Hands on an Elephant: What Enhances Community Resilience to Radicalization into Violent Extremism? – Findings from the Project on Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism in the Regions of Sahel and Maghreb* (Turin, Italy, 2020).

of the nine target countries, with specific attention given to the number and type of terrorist activities occurring between January 2015 and April 2020, in-depth analysis of the interventions and approaches implemented by civil society organizations and consideration of the grievances identified by local communities.

B. Working with vulnerable populations, in particular young people at risk, to strengthen the prevention and countering of violent extremism through empowerment and resilience-building

33. Focusing on Mali, UNICRI used numerous tools, including research, training workshops and mentoring schemes, to counter terrorists' narratives and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups to violent and extremist rhetoric.

34. The continuous engagement of young Malian leaders in UNICRI mentoring and training programmes focused on strengthening critical thinking skills, attitudes towards conflict management and political competences has enhanced local communities' efforts to prevent and counter radicalization and extremist activities. The young leaders, hailing from almost all the regions of Mali, have, with the Institute's support, transferred the knowledge they acquired to their communities of origin, including through organizing spontaneous peer-to-peer training sessions at the local level, led by UNICRI-trained young leaders and involving more than 800 people.

35. In-person training courses were organized on public speaking and communication tools and techniques to stimulate dialogue and community resilience. Intensive training carried out by local experts previously trained by UNICRI was provided to a group of 30 young leaders from different regions of Mali, with the overall purpose of enhancing their ability to communicate the value of resilience to violent extremism and to work with local communities to identify tailor-made responses to extremism and its narratives.

36. UNICRI also supported these young leaders through a dedicated mentoring programme. The Institute planned and monitored meetings between mentors and mentees and encouraged them to engage in regular dialogue, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICRI also supported the collection of qualitative data from the mentoring programme in order to identify good practices in strengthening youth resilience to violent extremism.

37. With a view to increasing awareness of the phenomenon of violent extremism in Mali from a youth perspective and supporting the design of future initiatives to prevent and counter violent extremism in the country with a special focus on resilience strategies, UNICRI prepared two research reports.[2] Both reports were based on data collected in Bamako, Mopti and Menaka, in Mali. The first report described a representative sample and offered new insights into the impact of terrorism on young people. The second report built on 300 questionnaires and explored support for and/or willingness to engage in violence across the three researched regions in Mali, focusing on the influence of diverse risk factors on possible engagement. Particular attention was paid to exposure to violence and insecurity; the role played by self-identification with ethnic and religious groups as drivers of engagement in violence; and respondents' attitudes towards the West.

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[2] United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, *When the Music Stops: The Impact of Terrorism on Malian Youth* (Turin, Italy; The Hague, 2020); *Dynamics of Support and Engagement: Understanding Malian Youths' Attitudes Towards Violent Extremism.*

C. Promoting the use of sport and its values as a tool to prevent violent extremism

38.   UNICRI collaborated with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the International Centre for Sport Security under the Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and Its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism. In 2020, UNICRI produced a draft collection of literature reviews, legislation, policies and good practices for using sport and its values as a tool to prevent violent extremism and radicalization. The purpose of the draft collection was to identify unique aspects and sharpen future initiatives within the framework of the Global Programme. UNICRI also launched an open call for proposals to provide small grants to civil society organizations delivering innovative actions that are aimed at using sport and its values to prevent radicalization and violent extremism, receiving 420 applications from more than 70 Member States. The activities will be implemented in 2021 and 2022.

D. Enhancing efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate violent extremist offenders and returning foreign terrorist fighters, both inside and outside prisons

39.   During 2020, UNICRI continued to support Member States in translating into national policies the generalized good practices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum as contained in its Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders, which addresses the rehabilitation needs of incarcerated violent extremists. In that context, UNICRI continued its engagement with national prison officials in Mali to establish a risk assessment procedure for imprisoned violent extremist offenders.

E. Addressing the nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime

40.   UNICRI continued to use the *Policy Toolkit on The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism* as the basis for interactive capacity-building activities for policymakers and practitioners to enable them to better understand and address the nexus and related crimes. In connection with the Global Counterterrorism Forum, UNICRI developed the Toolkit to expand on The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism and provided information on the nexus, its regional manifestations and recommendations on how to implement each of the 25 Good Practices. The Toolkit provides stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels with a practical tool for the application of the Good Practices in various regions, in addition to helping concerned Member States and other interested stakeholders to better understand, prevent and address the nexus.

41.   UNICRI used the Toolkit to train, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre of Kenya, a group of 30 participants from various law enforcement agencies in the country, including judges and prosecutors. The training took place online and included scenario-setting exercises based on real cases designed to highlight the Good Practices within the Toolkit, such as addressing information-sharing within and between agencies, strengthening the capacity of the judicial system to combat the nexus, ensuring that legal professionals recognize the links between transnational organized crime and terrorism, and prioritizing and reinforcing border security.

42.   Two online training sessions were also held for two different groups in Albania, in collaboration with the Coordination Centre for Countering Violent Extremism – Albania. The first group comprised social workers and representatives of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations; the training session focused on

local aspects of the nexus, ensuring community access to basic services, bolstering economic initiatives and supporting rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. The second training session focused on law enforcement capacity-building and was aimed at increasing the awareness and capacity of relevant practitioners in relation to the nexus and increasing their capacity to monitor cyberspace.

III. Countering organized crime and fighting all forms of trafficking and illicit financial flows

A. Improving the capacity of Member States to better trace, freeze, seize, confiscate and recover assets linked to major acts of corruption

43.   Despite the limitations caused by COVID-19, Tunisia drafted legislation, with technical support from UNICRI, to create a new agency to trace assets linked to corruption and other serious crimes. The support provided by UNICRI to the Government of Tunisia has also resulted in the drafting of new legislation on the non-penal confiscation of assets linked to corruption and multiple forms of organized crime; this legislation represents the first of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa region.

44.   The Institute embarked on additional anti-corruption work in Libya in September 2020. Notwithstanding the limitations imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICRI carried out a comprehensive review of the state of illicit financial flows generated by corruption in Libya.

45.   UNICRI commenced work relating to asset recovery and illicit financial flows in the Eastern Partnership countries in April 2020. The Institute carried out comprehensive reviews of and produced research papers on the state of illicit financial flows in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In addition to those reviews, UNICRI provided each country's policymakers with clear road maps of preliminary legal and operational adjustments needed to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the tracing, freezing, seizure, confiscation and recovery of assets linked to organized crime and high-level corruption.

B. Strengthening policies and mechanisms to combat illicit financial flows, illegal trafficking and organized crime

46.   With a view to increasing knowledge of the various ways in which intellectual property infringements occur and improving the effectiveness of national and international responses, UNICRI continued to conduct in-depth analyses of case studies on the infringement of intellectual property rights in cooperation with the European Union Intellectual Property Office.

47.   In 2020, in-depth analyses were conducted of the following three cases: (a) a case from the Netherlands involving the infiltration of the legitimate supply chain with counterfeit beer; (b) a case from Denmark involving the criminal liability of a web page administrator that made profits by advertising an online copyright infringing tool (conditional liability); and (c) a case from Belgium involving the sale of counterfeit products through social media and the exploitation of temporary storage services.

48.   The findings from the analyses of these case studies are being applied as best practices and lessons learned by prosecutors and investigative judges in other countries to strengthen judicial proceedings and results.

49.   UNICRI also conducted a study to better identify and understand the practical application of legal measures that can be applied to online intellectual property infringements by way of judicial cooperation. The study increased knowledge of such

tools, resulting in their use by an increasing number of investigative and prosecutorial authorities.

IV. Reinforcing the rule of law in post-conflict countries

50. In 2020, UNICRI endeavoured to strengthen sustainable development, peacebuilding and democratic processes by promoting accountable institutions and the rule of law and building strong judicial institutions in post-conflict countries.

51. To that end, the Institute worked on raising national stakeholders' awareness of the needs and gaps in counter-terrorism policies and practices by bridging the gap between international standards and national programmes related to juvenile justice, and improving access to justice as a critical factor in preventing violent extremism and terrorist recruitment in post-conflict countries.

52. The support that the Institute provided to Member States in tracing and recovering assets linked to corruption and other forms of serious crimes contributed to strengthening the rule of law and public confidence and served as a model for post-conflict countries that were considering undertaking the recovery of stolen assets.

A. Improving the capacity of post-conflict countries to strengthen their criminal justice, law enforcement and oversight institutions

53. UNICRI undertook several initiatives to help to strengthen criminal justice, law enforcement and oversight institutions in post-conflict countries. This mainly involved assisting post-conflict countries in the recovery of stolen assets and the provision of training for the rehabilitation of criminals and violent extremists.

54. Moreover, training activities were delivered in order to reinforce the capacity of military personnel and peacekeepers deployed or to be deployed in post-conflict countries to support the transition to democracy. An on-line course on the protection of cultural heritage in post-conflict environments for peacekeepers was organized for 43 members of the Italian Army and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

B. Improving knowledge in criminal justice systems in post-conflict countries of the risk factors and links between transnational organized crime and terrorism

55. Following the publication of the *Policy Toolkit on The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism*, UNICRI advised Member States and interested stakeholders on how best to respond to the links between organized crime and terrorism, while enhancing their understanding of this evolving phenomenon and providing definitions and watch points to facilitate its monitoring.

V. Security through research, technology and innovation

56. UNICRI supported Member States, international organizations, the private sector, civil society organizations, the scientific and academic community and other relevant stakeholders in enhancing their understanding of both the risks and opportunities created by the latest developments in science and technology. The Institute also raised awareness of how technological advances could contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

57. UNICRI continued to reinforce the capacity of Member States to manage the risks of and opportunities offered by rapid advances in science and technology, including in the areas of artificial intelligence and robotics, augmented and virtual

reality, big data analytics, supply chain security and decentralized technologies. To that end, UNICRI strategically devoted its attention to increasing the understanding of law enforcement agencies of (a) risks related to the malicious use of technology; (b) innovative ideas for employing technology such as artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain and virtual reality to counter security threats and various forms of criminal activities, including terrorism and child exploitation, and (c) the legal, ethical and social challenges associated with the use of such technology.

A. Enhancing knowledge of advances in science and technology to combat weapons of mass destruction terrorism

58.   UNICRI continued to contribute to the prevention of future instances of weapons of mass destruction terrorism through the identification of risks and benefits associated with relevant advances in science and technology. In that regard, UNICRI collected data and information on technology-based ideas and options to prevent and combat such terrorism, including the use of big data analytics to monitor the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the use of distributed ledger technology to reinforce the current system of nuclear material accounting and control and the use of virtual reality to train customs authorities at border crossings.

59.   All data and information were discussed and validated during three virtual meetings with experts from Member States, international organizations, academia and technology sectors. Subsequently, a report was prepared describing the risks and opportunities related to technological innovation in the area of weapons of mass destruction terrorism, (publication forthcoming). The report was peer-reviewed by the Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Global Coordination Compact. UNICRI also organized a webinar with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre to disseminate the results. The webinar was attended by almost 200 representatives of Member States, international organizations and technology sectors.

B. Enhancing knowledge of advances in science and technology to counter criminal infiltration of the legitimate supply chain

60.   UNICRI continued to enhance knowledge of the role of technology in countering the threats posed by the infiltration by organized crime of the legitimate supply chain. In 2020, UNICRI focused on the following five main thematic areas: (a) food fraud; (b) illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; (c) counterfeit and substandard pesticides; (d) fuel fraud; and (e) illegal mining of and trafficking in precious metals.

61.   UNICRI worked in close cooperation with several national and international organizations, research centres and private sector entities to collect and analyse data related to risk scenarios and technology-based ideas and options to counter the criminal infiltration of the legitimate supply chain. The Institute organized three virtual workshops to validate the results and will publish a report on the analyses, findings and recommendations in 2021.

62.   UNICRI also organized an online specialized training session on the infiltration by organized crime of the legitimate supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic. The session brought together more than 160 participants from law enforcement agencies, government institutions, industry and academia.

C. Malicious use of social media and technology options

63.   In 2020, UNICRI monitored the malicious use of social media in relation to COVID-19, analysing in particular the role of violent non-State actors, including

terrorist, violent extremist and organized criminal groups. In November 2020, UNICRI published a report entitled "Stop the virus of disinformation: the malicious use of social media during COVID-19 and the technology options to fight it". The report describes how terrorist, violent extremist and organized criminal groups are trying to take advantage of the pandemic to expand their activities and jeopardize the efficacy and credibility of response measures by Governments. Monitoring by the Institute identified an exponential increase in the malicious use of social media to undermine trust in Governments and, at the same time, reinforce extremist narratives, recruitment strategies and control of the territory by criminal groups.

64. The report also analysed ways in which technology could provide valid instruments to combat online disinformation and misinformation, highlighting both the advantages and limitations. The report emphasized that technology could support but not replace people's ability to evaluate the veracity of online information. Moreover, it noted that the effective use of technology to detect and debunk disinformation should empower people using social media to make their own informed decisions about what is verified and what is not, which could, in turn, empower people to build a closer relationship with truth and justice.

65. As a follow-up to the report, UNICRI organized a training course on COVID-19 disinformation with government experts from Sierra Leone, in particular, media and communication experts from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Revenue Authority, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Defence and National Security and the Ministry of Health and Sanitation. The course analysed how violent non-State actors, including terrorist, violent extremist and organized criminal groups, are maliciously using social media during the COVID-19 pandemic to spread misinformation and disinformation. The course also provided possible strategies for detecting and debunking false information about COVID-19. UNICRI is planning to provide similar courses to other Member States in 2021.

D. Artificial intelligence: risks and opportunities

66. In 20202, UNICRI, through its Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, produced several reports on various aspects of artificial intelligence. A report entitled "*Towards Responsible AI Innovation: Second INTERPOL-UNICRI Report on Artificial Intelligence for Law Enforcement*" was issued as a product of the Institute's ongoing collaboration with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). It provided analysis of and insights into recent developments in artificial intelligence that are of relevance to law enforcement, including current trends in artificial intelligence domains and regulations, and recommended the creation of a responsible artificial intelligence innovation toolkit for law enforcement.

67. A second report, entitled "*Malicious Uses and Abuses of Artificial Intelligence*", prepared by UNICRI, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and TrendMicro, analysed the current state of the criminal use of artificial intelligence-based technologies, as well as attempts to abuse the artificial intelligence systems used by public or private bodies for criminal gain. In addition, UNICRI curated a "*Special Collection on Artificial Intelligence*", containing eight academic articles from forward-thinking scholars around the globe. The articles, which touch on a range of legal and policy-related questions and challenges, from deepfakes to social network analysis, are intended to serve as a resource for those developing and adapting artificial intelligence policy and legislation.

68. In cooperation with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, UNICRI undertook a major study on the malicious use of artificial intelligence for terrorist purposes, examining trends and developments in the field of artificial intelligence and drawing inferences from the existing modi operandi of terrorist groups and individuals, as well as reporting uses and abuses of artificial intelligence by criminals. The resulting report, which will be published in 2021, identifies and describes several potential malicious uses of artificial intelligence in both the physical and cyber world,

as well as two potential ways in which terrorist groups and individuals could abuse artificial intelligence systems put in place by public or private entities, and it provides an overall assessment of the threat for national authorities and concerned stakeholders.

69. In May 2020, UNICRI organized a range of virtual events, including a technical workshop with INTERPOL entitled "COVID 19: how can artificial intelligence support law enforcement", to explore how artificial intelligence may assist law enforcement in their role in containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic while protecting front-line officers from infection.

70. UNICRI also organized two regional workshops focusing on artificial intelligence and crime prevention in Africa and Latin America, in cooperation with Technology Against Crime in Africa and C-Minds. Both events sought to raise awareness among law enforcement experts of the challenges posed and opportunities offered by artificial intelligence.

71. In November 2020, in cooperation with INTERPOL, UNICRI organized the third annual Global Meeting on Artificial Intelligence for Law Enforcement, which was held virtually and brought together more than 600 registered participants from law enforcement, industry and academia over the course of five days. The theme of the meeting was "Galvanizing momentum for responsible artificial intelligence" and one of its major focuses was the shaping of the responsible artificial intelligence innovation toolkit for law enforcement.

72. Lastly, UNICRI began exploring the practical application of artificial intelligence to combat the rise in online child sexual abuse material through a new initiative called Artificial Intelligence for Safer Children, implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of the United Arab Emirates. UNICRI launched the initiative at an Artificial Intelligence for Good webinar hosted by the International Telecommunication Union in October 2020 and also featured it at a special session during the Global Meeting on Artificial Intelligence for Law Enforcement, held in November 2020.

VI. Threat response and risk mitigation: security governance

73. Throughout 2020, UNICRI developed new ideas to prevent and mitigate global security threats and promote viable strategies to address a wide variety of emerging safety risks. The Institute continued to support Member States' efforts to improve existing policies aimed at enhancing overall preparedness for and capacity to mitigate the consequences of incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials, particularly through the strengthening of inter-agency coordination and cooperation.

74. With regard to nuclear security, UNICRI developed capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing the overall capabilities of law enforcement and security agencies to thwart attempts to traffic radiological and nuclear material, including through the timely exchange of information and intelligence.

A. Improved inter-agency cooperation in relation to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials

75. UNICRI continued to support the efforts of the 62 Member States currently participating in the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative to improve existing policies aimed at enhancing overall preparedness for and capacity to mitigate the consequences of incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials, particularly through the strengthening of inter-agency coordination and cooperation. The main focus during 2020 related to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic,

which has a direct connection to biological threats. This included several targeted activities facilitated by UNICRI in different regions, including:

(a)   The dissemination of a COVID-19 needs and support survey to better understand the needs of and support the 62 Member States participating in the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative in their management of the COVID-19 pandemic;

(b)   The review of ongoing projects and the tailoring of their activities to address the needs of Member States during the COVID-19 crisis, including the provision of relevant training and equipment;

(c)   The organization of virtual regional round-table meetings for eight different regions and interregional meetings to facilitate regional and trans-regional cooperation in respect of COVID-19;

(d)   The implementation of COVID-19 national response plans in the countries of the African Atlantic Façade through the organization of in-person training sessions on safe and dignified burials and crisis communication. A total of 20 training sessions were organized, covering several regions in each country and delivering training to 450 persons. The training sessions were carried out by national experts previously trained by UNICRI;

(e)   The drafting of guidelines to support countries in the Gulf region in their management of the COVID-19 crisis;

(f)   The raising of awareness among young people of human-caused and natural chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks, and bio-risks such as the COVID-19 outbreak, through the organization of a drawing competition for schoolchildren in Uzbekistan on the theme of a "Safe world through children's eyes";

(g)   The organization of technical webinars in Central Asia, Eastern and Central Africa, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel regions, South-East Asia and South East and Eastern Europe to share good practices and lessons learned in the management of the COVID-19 crisis.

B.   Combating trafficking in radiological and nuclear material

76.   UNICRI continued to support selected countries in the Middle East (Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon) and the Black Sea region (Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) in improving the capacity of State security and law enforcement officials to devise, plan and carry out intelligence operations in order to thwart attempts to traffic radiological and nuclear materials and in fostering cooperation among state security and law enforcement officials of these States. This included the development and implementation, in 2020, of training curricula for law enforcement and intelligence officials and officials of other relevant authorities and agencies in the Middle East, as well as the implementation of in-depth assessments in relation to efforts to counter trafficking in radiological and nuclear material in the Black Sea region.

77.   Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual train-the-trainers sessions were organized and held in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. During the sessions, participants, comprising officials from law enforcement, intelligence and regulatory authorities, had the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of security and preventive measures to combat trafficking in radiological and nuclear material, as well as to improve their training and communication skills. The training sessions empowered local radiological and nuclear security practitioners to deliver training to their national officers, thereby creating a sustainable training system. After each virtual train-the-trainers session, online mentoring and coaching sessions were held with the participants to assist them in organizing national training sessions.

78.   In Beirut in October 2020, a four-day national training session was held in which practitioners who had attended the train-the-trainers session delivered training to around 25 participants from various Lebanese agencies, covering the topics of

radiological and nuclear security and countering trafficking in radiological and nuclear material.

79.   Lastly, virtual assessment missions were carried out in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The assessments involved plenary sessions and extensive discussions with individual agencies (intelligence, police, customs and nuclear regulatory authorities) to identify capabilities, expertise and areas for improvement in relation to efforts to counter trafficking in radiological and nuclear material.

C. Supporting Member States in the establishment of non-invasive, integrated and holistic safety and security planning policies

80.   UNICRI assisted Member States in adopting measures necessary to ensure the protection of vulnerable targets, crowded spaces and critical infrastructure.

81.   To that end, the Institute developed a comprehensive package of technical tools to promote the security of major sporting events and to identify a series of global standards to raise awareness of the risks connected to their organization. On the basis of its extensive experience and knowledge in this field, UNICRI became a partner of the Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and Its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism, coordinated by the Office of Counter-Terrorism. Within this framework, UNICRI coordinated the drafting of two chapters of a guide for ensuring the security of major events, to be published in the course of 2021. The chapter on security governance provides a step-by-step approach to designing a comprehensive strategy for securing a major event, while the chapter on security deliverables identifies the security elements to be considered within this framework.

82.   Under the Global Programme, UNICRI also promoted and coordinated a workshop on the effect of COVID-19 on the security of major sporting events to exchange ideas on how Member States, organizing committees and sport federations were planning to reorganize their safety and security structures to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the suspension of sporting activities and the resulting decrease in income. All participants agreed on the need to further improve inter-agency coordination at the national and international levels, as a key element of efforts to strengthen safety and security services.

83.   UNICRI supported, in cooperation with the Organization of American States, the finalization of the Tourism Security Strategy developed in Chile with national stakeholders such as the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of the Interior, law enforcement agencies, the judicial system, representatives of embassies and relevant actors from the private sector). The Security Strategy provides an overview of threats, risks and challenges faced by the tourism sector in the various regions of Chile, with the aim of identifying appropriate solutions to mitigate those risks and improve preventive and response measures to counter criminal activities affecting the development of tourism.

84.   UNICRI completed the programme launched in 2017 to strengthen crime prevention and response in tourism destinations in Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. During more than three years of intensive research, capacity-building and dialogue with participants from beneficiary Member States, local communities and project partners, over 800 representatives from the public and private sectors, all of whom played an important role in the tourism industry in their country, participated in training and working meetings. A series of key findings and recommendations were identified and approved by the beneficiary countries. Those findings and recommendations were used to produce a structured guide to secure tourism destinations in Central America and the Caribbean, which may also be used by countries that are tourism destinations in other parts of the world.

85.   On the basis of this successful experience, a new programme on the protection of crowded spaces and vulnerable targets, including elements of tourism and major

event security, was launched in late 2020. Its aim is to coordinate and develop regional security policies from the 34 Member States in the Americas (North America, Latin America and the Caribbean) and produce technical tools to facilitate the exchange of expertise and technical assistance.

VII. Preventing crime through the protection and empowerment of vulnerable groups

86.   The protection of vulnerable groups, reduction of risk factors and promotion of positive change continued to constitute priority areas for UNICRI in 2020. As part of the implementation of its numerous cross-cutting initiatives, UNICRI paid particular attention to young people and contributed to enhancing the role of the family as a key factor in the early detection of radicalization or various forms of addiction, including drug use.

A.   Promoting and delivering crime prevention initiatives targeted at vulnerable populations

87.   UNICRI continued its pilot research in Italy, Lebanon and Tunisia to identify essential policy elements for supporting and consolidating the role of families in drug use prevention and recovery. Focus group discussions held in the three countries in 2020 served as an opportunity to bring together representatives of government institutions and civil society organizations and professionals working in the public and private sectors. The focus groups reviewed the current challenges and provided various recommendations on how to consolidate the role of the family in the prevention of drug use among young people, such as by reinforcing networks of services, strengthening cooperation mechanisms among relevant stakeholders and taking account of cultural and contextual barriers.

88.   A set of context-specific recommendations were developed and included in the three country reports with the aim of enhancing awareness, promoting knowledge-sharing and contributing to efforts to improve the intervention system so as to better respond to the specific needs of families and provide rapid intervention in high-risk situations, ensuring the protection of human rights, reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening individual and family resilience. Extraordinary circumstances such as those experienced in many countries during the COVID-19 pandemic have further highlighted how the vulnerabilities of families can rapidly change, emphasizing the importance of enhancing their role in protecting and supporting young people.

89.   In 2020, UNICRI drafted a final report to present the results of the pilot project (publication forthcoming). The report includes a description of the activities carried out in the three countries and proposes concrete actions for each country in relation to the current system of services and institutions actively working in this area, to enable a more effective response that is more closely tailored to the specific needs of families.

90.   With a view to better contextualizing the emerging threats and trends resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and to address vulnerable populations through the lens of crime prevention, justice, human rights, rule of law and development, UNICRI organized a four-day forum on "COVID-19, crime prevention and criminal justice priorities: a spotlight on vulnerable groups" in December 2020. The forum provided an opportunity to identify practical measures to protect the most vulnerable people and reduce their risk of victimization. Key recommendations were identified for use by United Nations agencies and Member States to more effectively respond to the COVID-19 crisis, as well as to enhance preparedness for future crises. The forum identified the protection of human rights, the upholding of the rule of law and the granting of access to justice for all as essential cross-cutting issues. More than 200 people took part in the event, including representatives of diplomatic missions, government institutions, academia, international organizations and civil society.

91.   One of the issues addressed in the forum was the fragility of the economy as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of that fragility being exploited by organized criminal groups to expand their business and influence. Criminal groups have demonstrated their opportunism during the pandemic, particularly in the area of counterfeiting and infiltration of the legal economy. They have exploited a vast amount of resources allocated and distributed by States in response to the pandemic, and they have used this dynamic to bribe public officials, siphoning funds away from key sectors such as health care, education and social protection services.

92.   The forum also highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic has been incorporated into the narratives and propaganda of terrorist groups, how these narratives have spread across social media platforms and how young people, spending increased time online, have been affected by extremist ideas.

93.   UNICRI prepared a report on the forum, entitled *COVID-19, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Priorities: A Spotlight on Vulnerable Groups*, which summarized the presentations, discussions and feedback from experts and other participants collected during the four-day event.

B.   Enhancing the capacity of key actors to reach vulnerable individuals and populations

94.   UNICRI continued to support Indonesia and the Philippines in their efforts to improve their juvenile justice systems and increase the use of alternatives to imprisonment and diversion measures to prevent recruitment by criminal organizations and violent extremist groups. This included support in the development of national action plans in both countries with a view to establishing a set of practical activities to be implemented in order to improve each juvenile justice system, with the specific aim of increasing the use of alternative and diversion measures, thus mitigating the risk of exposing children to violent extremist and organized crime recruiters operating in prisons.

95.   Similarly, UNICRI undertook work in Mali and the Sahel-Maghreb region to integrate and, in some cases, rehabilitate young people and other vulnerable groups into society, strengthening the community's resilience to violent extremism and criminal organizations. For instance, through the design of tailored training and empowerment activities and their delivery to local young leaders in post-conflict settings, the Institute effectively promoted the importance of critical thinking, conflict management and political competence to offer positive alternatives to incitement to violence, which is often conducive to terrorist radicalization.

VIII.   Supporting the Strategic Programme Framework for the period 2019–2022

96.   UNICRI implements its extensive portfolio of activities primarily through voluntary contributions from Member States, including an annual voluntary contribution from the Government of Italy, its host country. UNICRI does not receive funding from the regular budget of the United Nations. The vast majority of the voluntary contributions are received in the form of short-term, earmarked and project-specific funds. Although UNICRI actively mobilizes funds and consistently strives to expand its donor base, the receipt of such funding has been intermittent and unpredictable in nature, which has had an impact on both the stability and sustainability of its operations. In such financial circumstances, the successful implementation of the ambitious Strategic Programme Framework for the period 2019–2022 in a comprehensive manner is likely to prove challenging without the pivotal support and voluntary contributions of Member States and other donors.

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