

PAPMUN2025



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME

TOPIC A: ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS: PATHWAYS TO PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

TOPIC B: INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ITS ROLE IN GLOBAL VIOLENCE: SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES.

PAPMUN2025

TOPIC A

DEAR DELEGATES,

The Chair wants to officially welcome you to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) committee. We feel truly honored to lead the delegations participating in this committee at the First Edition of the Prepa Anáhuac Puebla Model of the United Nations, PPMUN.

As members of the Chair, our main role is to provide guidance in fostering productive debates and facilitating the exchange of proposals and ideas, so that impactful discussions on our topics of interest can take place. The mission of UNODC is to address the challenges posed by illicit drugs, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism, while promoting justice and the rule of law. By encouraging international cooperation and assisting member states, UNODC aims to build resilient societies that uphold human rights and public safety.

The core values of UNODC emphasize transparency, collaboration, and a strong commitment to combating crime and ensuring justice. UNODC promotes accountability through innovative strategies and comprehensive solutions to tackle some of the world's most critical issues. The Chair encourages delegates to embrace these values while maintaining a professional and respectful environment during debates. This will help foster meaningful resolutions and allow everyone to grow throughout this experience.

We are excited to meet you at PPMUN, and look forward to an engaging and insightful committee session!

Sincerely,



PAMELA MORENO RODRÍGUEZ
President of the committee

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was established in 1997 with 500 staff members worldwide. It is a global leader from the United Nations that arises from the fight against illicit substances, drugs, international crime, and implementing a program against terrorism. Its headquarters are located in Vienna and operate 20 field offices, as well as links offices in New York and Brussels.

Illicit drug production and trafficking and drug-related crime has become a global threat and with it UNODC has worked to educate people around the world throughout the dangers of this problem. To achieve these aims, UNODC has launched a breadth of initiatives, including many alternatives in the area of illicit drug crop cultivation, taking care about the illicit crops and the implementation of projects against money laundering around the world. "UNODC also works to improve crime prevention and assist with criminal justice reform in order to strengthen the rule of law, promote stable and viable criminal justice systems and combat the growing threats of transnational organized crime and corruption" (UNOV, n.d.).

According to this; in 2002, the General Assembly approved an expanded program launched by UNODC about the activities for the Terrorism Prevention Branch, these activities focus on providing support to different countries by ratifying and for it implementing all the universal legal instruments against terrorism.

Around the history of UNODC has been the world directly with many governments and non-governmental organizations having 20 field offices covering 150 countries. Therefore UNODC field staff has developed and has implemented drug control and crime prevention programs sculpted to countries' particular needs historically.

Illicit financial flows represent a severe global challenge, undermining economic development, eroding public trust, and exacerbating inequality. These flows, which encompass the illegal movement of money or capital across borders, include practices such as tax evasion, corruption, and money

laundering. The scale of IFFs is staggering, with estimates suggesting that developing countries lose hundreds of billions of dollars annually due to these activities, diverting resources from critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Addressing IFFs requires international collaboration and innovative strategies to ensure accountability and sustainable development.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

1990s: It is considered that the term “IFF” is a powerful and constructive umbrella by the international community that emerged in this decade.

2000s: When we as an international community talk about IFFs is not just about multinational tax abuses, when the corporate accounts that hide the transfer of profits are opaqued, it is based on the financial secrecy offered by “tax haven” jurisdictions, and this is also a critical factor in illicit flows. With this in mind the issue of IFFs gained global prominence in this century as globalization facilitated the rapid movement of capital across borders. While beneficial for trade and investment, globalization also created opportunities for financial crime. Offshore tax havens, opaque financial systems, and weak regulatory frameworks in certain jurisdictions have historically enabled these flows.

2005: The term “IFF” was first introduced by Raymond Baker in his book titled “Capitalism’s Achilled Heel.” Arguments that the context of the beginning of the 21st century propitiate abusive behaviour of many nations around the world that caused massive trade mispricing, and stripped low-income recipient countries of their tax rights, despite the often desperate need for revenue to support public spending on health, education and infrastructure. For the same reason, a key element of the Tax Justice Network’s policy platform is the proposal that multinationals submit public country-by-country reports to expose discrepancies between where economic activity takes place and where it occurs. taxable income.

2007: The Tax Justice Network began the process to create the Financial Secrecy Index, that identified major financial jurisdictions to countries like Switzerland which is internationally known because it does very well in perceptions of corruption, and as a central to the problem of producing and promoting corrupt flows elsewhere. Unfortunately, as an international community, we have a system in which we lose sight of the central factors that cause the problem and focus precisely on corruption in low-income countries, which is why an important element of the illicit flows agenda is relevant, where the financial sector recognizes high-income jurisdictions, for the weakening of income, the weakening of good governance in countries around the world. Instead of the leaders of great nations asking “Why is your country corrupt?”, they should better say: “What are the causes of corruption and where?”

2013: Since this year, a range of innovative policy proposals have arrived onto the agendas of the G8, G20 and OECD groups of countries to fight against IFFs.

2015: The report of the Secretary-General’s High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, co-chaired by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono from Indonesia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf from Liberia, and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, identified IFF as an issue to be included in the new framework.

2019: Worse still, even now on this year there has been a concerted effort to subvert the objective by removing multinational companies from the crosshairs despite the constant emphasis on their tax evasion practices in the academic and policy literature and in the reports of the two high-level panels that seated the bases for global agreement on the objective in 2015.

Even with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) leading a technical process to identify and agree on proposals, there is still no certainty that these organizations that precede the United Nations (UN) guarantee that the goal is the original policy and the creation of accountability mechanisms appropriate to support transparent progress.

KEY POINTS

ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS (IFFS)

Illicit financial flows refer to the movement of money across borders that is illegal in its source (e.g. corruption, smuggling), its transfer (e.g. tax evasion), or its use (e.g. terrorist financing)” (International Monetary Fund, n.d.). IFFs arise from criminal activities, behaviors related to tax and commercial practices and directly generated by illicit income, like cross-border transactions performed in the illicit trade of goods such as drugs or the illicit income through investment in financial and non-financial holdings.

IMPACT

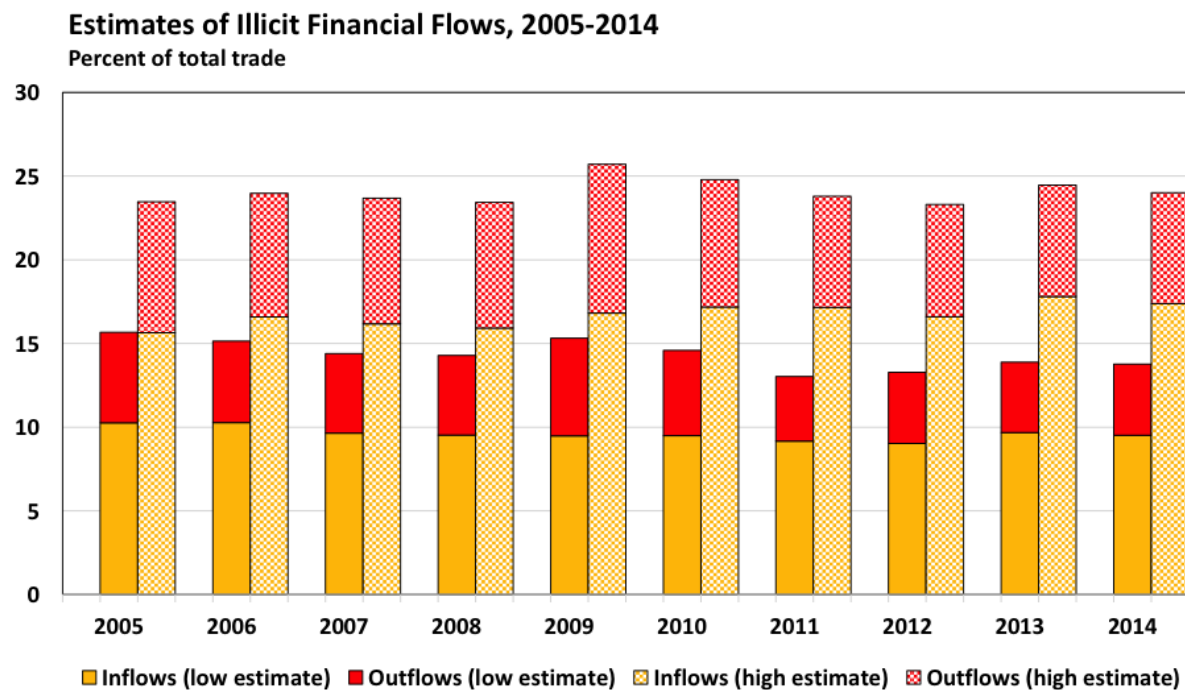
IFFs can have a significant impact on the economic stability of a country and the global financial system. They can drain foreign exchange reserves, distort competition, inflate prices for real estate and other assets, lower tax receipts, and reduce government revenue. They divert resources from public spending and can cut into the capital available for private investment. Illegal flows also can encourage further criminal activity, undermine the rule of law, erode trust in public institutions, and threaten a country’s political stability. In addition, this has a negative impact on the broader economy, with potential spillovers into

other economies, including by deepening inequality and weakening social cohesion across and within countries.

Global Financial Integrity. (2017).

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

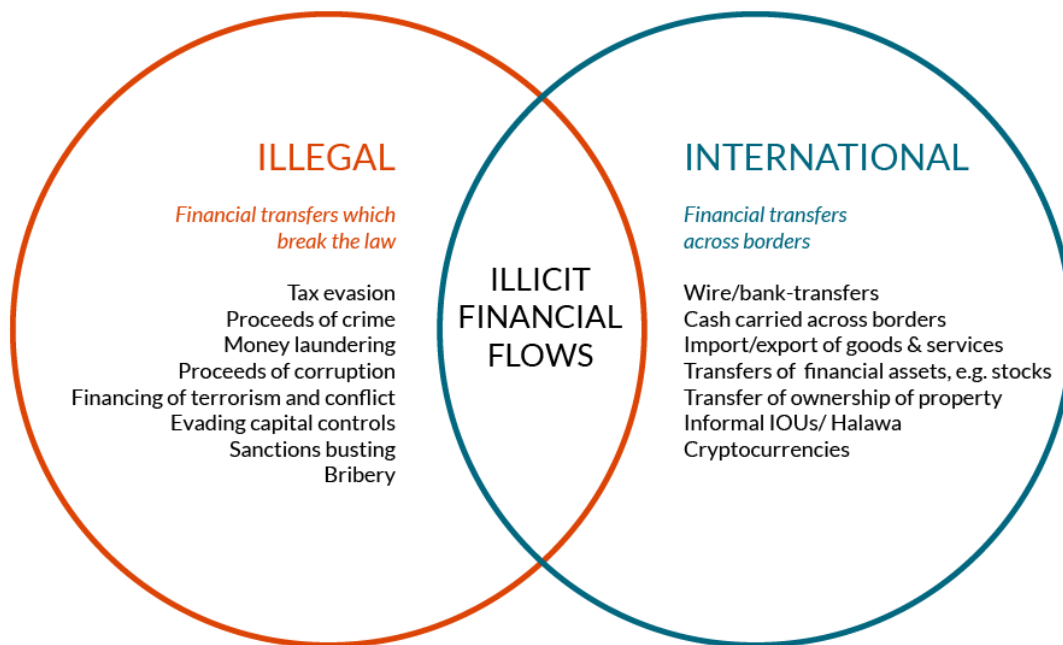
Inherently difficult to measure due to the illegality and opacity associated with some of these flows, their transfer across borders, and the lack of transparency into the activities that underlie them. Many of these flows are generated by



SOURCES: GFI staff estimates using data from the International Monetary Fund.

NOTE: The low estimates are based on bilateral trade data between developing countries and advanced countries only; the high estimates scale up the low estimates country by country to account for misinvoicing between developing countries. A country's total trade is defined as its exports plus its imports. Estimates of total trade were calculated as an average of the magnitude reported by each developing country and the magnitude reported by that country's trade. Total trade is defined as the total exports plus imports for developing countries as provided by the compilers of the IMF's Direction of Trade Statistics.

activities that are deemed financial crimes in the context of anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT). Attempts to measure ITAFF rely on indirect methods, so estimates are often approximations and sometimes incorrect. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that these flows may be substantial.



Forstater, M. (2018).

CURRENT SITUATION

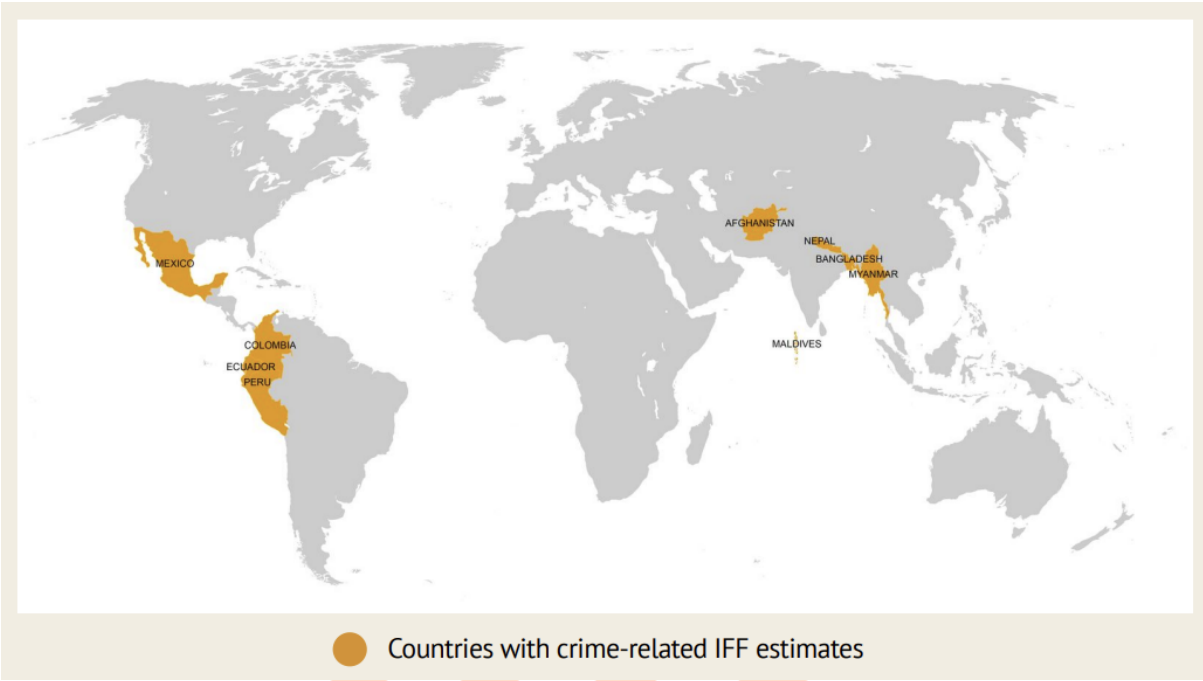
Although there is still a dearth of national data on IFFs globally, there has been a notable advancement since the UN Assembly adopted the indicator 16.4.1. ("Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows"). For example, in 2017 to track progress toward Sustainable Development Target 16.4, referring to a significant reduction in arms and illicit financial flows by 2030. SDG indicator 16.4.1 was assigned to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS) has provided definitions of illegal activities generating IFFs. Moreover, since 2017, UNODC and UNCTAD have taken a series of coordinated actions leading to a

conceptual framework for the statistical measurement of IFFs, the implementation of pilot measurement exercises and the development of methodological guidelines to measure IFFs from selected illegal market activities.

Additionally, in October 2019, the 10th session of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators,4 held in Addis Ababa, reviewed the methodology and reclassified the indicator from Tier III to Tier II, meaning that the indicator is conceptually clear and has set out internationally established standards, although data are not yet regularly produced by countries. This document details the crime-related IFF estimates resulting from the engagement of UNODC with countries to implement the methodology outlined in the UNODC-UNCTAD conceptual framework.

Availability of crime-related illicit financial flow estimates, by country according to UNODC.



(UNODC, n.d.)

UN ACTIONS

The United Nations had reached a methodological development with key activities and achievements, around the last few years despite global events as pandemic:

MARCH 2022: Conceptual Framework for the Statistical Measurement of IFFs endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission

OCTOBER 2020: Launch of the Conceptual Framework for the Statistical Measurement of Illicit Financial Flows

OCTOBER 2019: Reclassification of SDG Indicator 16.4.1 from Tier III to Tier II

JANUARY 2018: Establishment of the UNCTAD-UNODC Task Force on the statistical measurement of illicit financial flows.

Also had achieved technical assistance and capacity building by:

ASIA-PACIFIC PROJECT

Project duration: July 2020 - December 2022

Project partners: UNODC, UNCTAD, ESCAP

Pilot countries: Viet Nam, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan

Project funding: UNDESA

LATIN-AMERICA PROJECT

Project duration: July 2017 - December 2020

Project partners: UNODC, UNCTAD, UNODC-INEGI CoE

Pilot countries: Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador

Project funding: UNDESA

CAPACITY BUILDING IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

UNODC external support on UNCTAD Project that consisted of UN Joint SDG Fund Support to Egypt Integrated SDGs Financing and the UNCTAD-ECA DA project that consisted of defining, estimating and disseminating statistics on illicit financial flows in Africa.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Developing and developed countries need to work toward a common goal that requires collaborating on management and regulation of finances, governance and transparency, natural resources, trade, and proactive international cooperation on proceeds of crime and tax. Developed countries need to take the lead on preventing inflows of illicit money, while developing countries must address weaknesses in their legal and regulatory regimes that make them susceptible to the activities that lead to IFFs.

While private sector firms expect a business environment with fair, clear and transparent tax and trade policies, they must do their part by ensuring their tax and trade practices comply with local laws. The incentive for firms to engage in illegal behavior is strong when they believe their competitors are receiving unfair advantages. Initiatives like Publish What You Pay are beginning to develop mechanisms to increase transparency around financial arrangements between governments and firms, which is essential for constructive engagement.

Firms and governments have gained experience in implementing “transparency pacts” and other forms of collective action to support ethical conduct around particular transactions. A potentially more far-reaching development is the increased attention the private sector is paying to adherence to ethical compliance across all business practices. Increased legal and market risks connected to being associated with corruption have spurred firms to establish ethics and compliance programs, and have generated a growing market in compliance management certification. These

examples of private sector efforts, done in collaboration with government, are likely to be an essential element of a coordinated effort to address IFFs.

Civil society organizations have a role to play as advocates to increase transparency around revenues and expenditures, as well as to monitor behavior of public and private officials.

The international community needs to address countries and firms seeking to profit from illegal behaviors that undercut national efforts to implement effective and transparent tax and trade policies.

Technical expertise, knowledge and convening power to bring together developed and developing countries, international organizations, and standard-setting bodies to work together on reducing IFFs and returning illegal assets, to coordinate global activities and country work, and to help shape global standards.

Given our expertise and internationally recognized position in resource management, financial and fiscal transparency, financial intelligence and regulation, anti-money laundering, and the return of stolen assets, we are well placed to address the issues and help countries devise tailored solutions.

Every national institution should work hand in hand with the government to help build capacity in critical areas for reducing IFFs. This may include support for anti-corruption efforts and improved auditing as well as assistance on policies relating to public financial management, tax evasion, public procurement, trade facilitation and border crossing, natural resource management, and economic regulation.

To face the critical first step in responding to IFFs is to make the flows visible. It is necessary to continue the work to help countries identify and respond to risks relating to money laundering as the UNODC or UNCTAD has been working.

May be implemented a national risk assessment tool focuses on all offenses that generate illegal proceeds, including corruption, tax evasion, organized

crime, and environmental crime and helps countries understand the extent of their exposure to many of the activities that give rise to IFFs.

Improve the access to information on beneficial owners for public authorities and strengthen the exchange of tax information. Help governments build systems for asset disclosure by public officials and to protect against money laundering. These efforts to build transparency and accountability also aim to ensure that clean public officials and businesses are recognized, while corrupt and criminal ones are sanctioned.

COUNTRIES INVOLVED

Latin America: IFFs studies of measurement have been conducted in four different countries from the Latin American region (Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru).

COLOMBIA: Continues to account for the largest share of coca bush cultivation and cocaine manufacture worldwide. Here the IFFs are generated when the cocaine produced is exported, and also may arise when resident citizens derive income from their participation in the international cocaine trafficking chain. Outward IFFs are generated when the intermediate inputs (mainly chemical substances) required for the production process are imported from abroad.

ECUADOR: Is a transit country and a country of origin for migrants, many of which make use of smuggling services. Transnational criminal organizations also seek to operate in the country due to its proximity to the main producers of cocaine in the Andean region (especially Colombia)

MEXICO: The cartels in the United States and Mexico take place predominantly throughout both countries in which the population of the United States has higher numbers of using drugs that are not even manufactured in Mexico. At the same time, drug trafficking from Mexico to the United States by Mexican

cartels is a very lucrative business, and methamphetamine, cocaine, and opiates/opioids make up a large part of the illicit drug market in the region.

PERU: It is recognized as the second largest producer of cocaine worldwide. Mafias residing in Peru export cocaine to South American markets, and generate additional income by selling cocaine to non-European drug trafficking organizations involved in the extra continental export of the drug.

ASIA-PACIFIC: In 2020, UNODC, together with ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) and UNCTAD, began the implementation of a new project on measuring IFFs in the Asia-Pacific region.

AFGHANISTAN: The production of opiates like opium, morphine, and heroin is the largest illegal economic activity in this country. nced in April 2022.

BANGLADESH: Is a large market for illicit drugs, with significant consumption of substances such as heroin, methamphetamine tablets, and the non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids such as buprenorphine and phensedyl.

MALDIVES: The trafficking of different types of drugs have been observed in this country during the last few years, since this region is mainly used as a transit point for drug trafficking.

MYANMAR: World's second largest country that shares opium cultivation. In 2022, the area under opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar was estimated at 40,100 hectares. This estimate is 33%, or about 10,000 hectares, more than in 2021, reversing the downward trend that started in 2014.

NEPAL: The heroin is a main drug that is trafficked into the country from other source countries. Due to this, Nepali victims are forced to perform jobs closely related to the long-standing phenomenon of the migration of Nepali migrant workers who risk being exploited once abroad. For instance, income generation inward IFFs related to forced labour in Nepal in 2021 were estimated at USD\$3.3 million, since the range was: USD\$1.5–5.9 million.

QUESTIONS

“Why is your country corrupt?” or better think about “What are the causes of corruption and where?”

How can international cooperation reduce illicit financial flows?

What role do multinational companies play in IFFs, and how can they be regulated?

Should developed countries take more responsibility in preventing IFFs?

How can developing countries strengthen their legal frameworks against IFFs?

What role should the private sector play in addressing IFFs?

How can IFFs be accurately measured and tracked, especially in developing nations?

How can civil society aid in increasing transparency around IFFs?

What impact do IFFs have on global economic stability?

What steps can be taken to combat tax evasion in tax havens?

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TOPIC B

INTRODUCTION

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across borders, include practices such as tax evasion, corruption, and money laundering. The scale of IFFs is staggering, with estimates suggesting that developing countries lose hundreds of billions of dollars annually due to these activities, diverting resources from critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Addressing IFFs requires international collaboration and innovative strategies to ensure accountability and sustainable development.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

1909: The Shanghai Opium Commission convened, bringing together 13 nations to address the growing opium crisis. The commission aimed to curb the spread of opium addiction, which had become a major public health issue, particularly in China.

1912: The Hague Opium Convention—the first international drug control treaty—was signed, mandating countries to regulate opium, morphine, and cocaine. The treaty set the foundation for global drug control by establishing international standards for narcotic substances.

1920s–1930s: The League of Nations expanded drug control, restricting cannabis in the 1925 Geneva Convention and strengthening regulations on opiates and cocaine. The Geneva Convention marked a critical step in global drug regulation, introducing the concept of a "narcotic drug" and creating the International Opium Control Board (OICB).

1930: The U.S. Congress passed the Marijuana Tax Act, effectively criminalizing cannabis and signaling the beginning of the U.S. War on Drugs at home.

1946: The newly established United Nations took over the drug control functions of the League of Nations. The UN played a crucial role in continuing global drug policy enforcement, creating institutions like the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) to manage international drug control.

1961: The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs was signed under UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), unifying international drug control under one framework and classifying drugs into strict schedules. It also introduced measures to reduce the cultivation of opium poppies and coca plants.

1971: The Convention on Psychotropic Substances was introduced to control synthetic drugs such as amphetamines, LSD, and barbiturates. This treaty reflected the rising concerns over the growing prevalence of mind-altering substances that were not previously covered by the 1961 Single Convention.

1971: U.S. President Richard Nixon declared drug abuse “public enemy number one,” launching the global War on Drugs. This led to the expansion of anti-drug efforts in the U.S., which had international ramifications as many countries followed the U.S. lead in aggressive anti-drug policies.

1984: The UNODC International Drug Control Programme was created to strengthen the international response to illicit drug trade and abuse. The initiative focused on enhancing cooperation between countries to combat trafficking and ensure the implementation of international conventions.

1988: The UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances strengthened laws against drug trafficking, money laundering, and precursor chemicals. This treaty represented a significant global effort to target the criminal enterprises behind drug trade by enhancing enforcement measures and providing mechanisms for international cooperation.

2000s: The rise of synthetic drugs like fentanyl and methamphetamine, combined with dark web markets, challenged traditional drug enforcement. The ability to manufacture and distribute drugs remotely, combined with the anonymity offered by the internet, created new challenges for law enforcement.

2003: The UNODC launched the World Drug Report, an annual analysis of global drug trends. The report provides insights into the state of drug production, trafficking, consumption, and international enforcement efforts, acting as a crucial tool for policy-making and international coordination.

2016: The United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Drugs emphasized a shift from punitive policies to public health-focused solutions. UNGASS 2016 recognized the need for harm reduction approaches, such as needle exchange programs, overdose prevention, and access to treatment, in addition to the traditional law enforcement measures.

2020: The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global drug trade patterns, with some regions experiencing a decline in trafficking while others saw an increase in synthetic drug production due to factory shutdowns.

Governments struggle to balance law enforcement, harm reduction, and human rights while addressing global drug trafficking networks. Efforts continue to evolve, with some nations moving toward decriminalization or legalization of certain substances, especially cannabis, while the rise of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs poses a new threat to public health worldwide.

KEY POINTS

IMPACT ON SECURITY

Drug trafficking fuels gang violence, terrorism, and insurgencies worldwide. Criminal organizations engage in armed conflicts over smuggling routes, destabilizing entire regions. In some areas, drug-funded militias challenge national sovereignty, creating lawless zones where state authority is weak or nonexistent. Additionally, illicit drug profits fund extremist groups, exacerbating global security threats.

GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

Cartels often infiltrate state institutions, eroding public trust. Officials at various levels—law enforcement, judiciary, and political offices—may be bribed or coerced into complicity. This corruption weakens democratic institutions, obstructs justice, and discourages investment, ultimately hindering national development. In extreme cases, narco-states emerge, where criminal syndicates exert de facto control over governments.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

While lucrative for criminal groups, the drug trade drains national economies. Resources are diverted from productive sectors toward law enforcement and incarceration. Furthermore, money laundering distorts financial markets, while drug-related instability discourages foreign investment and tourism. Workers suffering from addiction or incarceration reduce labor force productivity, further hampering economic growth.

PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

The spread of narcotics leads to addiction, overdoses, and strain on healthcare systems. Communities face rising costs in emergency care, rehabilitation, and social services. The proliferation of synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, exacerbates overdose rates, overwhelming hospitals and morgues. Moreover, intravenous drug use contributes to the spread of infectious diseases like HIV and hepatitis.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Effective countermeasures require cross-border collaboration and intelligence-sharing. Countries must coordinate efforts in drug interdiction, money laundering prevention, and extradition policies to dismantle transnational networks. Joint operations between law enforcement agencies, along with diplomatic initiatives, enhance the effectiveness of anti-narcotics strategies. However, disparities in legal frameworks and enforcement capabilities create challenges in maintaining unified global efforts.

CURRENT SITUATION

Drug trafficking exerts a profound and multifaceted impact on global security, governance, economies, and public health. Criminal organizations, driven by the lucrative drug trade, engage in violent conflicts over control of smuggling routes, leading to destabilization in various regions. For instance, in Latin America, competition among drug cartels has escalated violence, contributing to high homicide rates and undermining political stability. Similarly, in the Middle East, the proliferation of captagon—a potent amphetamine—has become a significant financial source for armed groups, further fueling regional instability.

The infiltration of drug cartels into state institutions poses a severe threat to governance and public trust. By bribing or coercing officials across various levels—law enforcement, judiciary, and political offices—these organizations weaken democratic institutions and obstruct justice. In West Africa, for example, Hezbollah has established funding channels involving money laundering and organized crime, often with the collusion of local elites, thereby undermining state authority and contributing to corruption.

Economically, while the drug trade generates substantial profits for criminal groups, it imposes significant costs on national economies. Resources are diverted from productive sectors to law enforcement and incarceration efforts. Money laundering associated with drug profits distorts financial markets, and drug-related violence discourages foreign investment and tourism. In regions like Latin America, the expansion of cocaine production has not only fueled local consumption but also led to increased trafficking to Europe and Asia, exacerbating economic and social challenges.

The public health ramifications of drug trafficking are dire. The widespread availability of narcotics leads to higher rates of addiction, overdoses, and a substantial strain on healthcare systems. In North America, the opioid crisis, particularly involving fentanyl—a synthetic opioid significantly more potent than morphine—has resulted in a dramatic increase in overdose deaths, overwhelming medical facilities and resources. Efforts to combat this crisis have been complicated by the international nature of drug production and trafficking networks.

Addressing the complex challenges posed by drug trafficking necessitates robust international cooperation. Effective countermeasures require cross-border collaboration and intelligence-sharing among nations. Joint operations, such as those conducted by the Colombian Navy with international partners, have led to significant drug seizures and the disruption of trafficking routes. However, disparities in legal frameworks, enforcement capabilities, and political will continue to pose challenges to unified global efforts against drug trafficking.

Regionally, drug production and trafficking manifest in various forms:

Latin America: Remains the largest producer of cocaine, with Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia at the center of production. The region has seen unprecedented rates of drug production, with new trafficking routes emerging in countries like Paraguay and Argentina.

ASIA: Faces a growing synthetic drug crisis, particularly with methamphetamine production in Myanmar and Afghanistan. The instability in these regions has contributed to increased production and trafficking of synthetic drugs.

WEST AFRICA: Has become a key transit hub for drug shipments from South America to Europe. The region's strategic location and porous borders make it an attractive route for traffickers, further complicating local governance and security.

NORTH AMERICA: Struggles with opioid and fentanyl trafficking, leading to high overdose rates. The synthetic nature of these drugs and their potent effects have exacerbated the public health crisis.

EUROPE: Has seen a rise in organized crime involvement in drug distribution networks. Criminal organizations have expanded their operations, leading to increased availability of various illicit substances across the continent.

In summary, the pervasive influence of drug trafficking across different regions underscores the necessity for comprehensive, coordinated international strategies. Addressing this multifaceted issue requires not only law enforcement efforts but also public health initiatives, economic development,

and robust international collaboration to mitigate the adverse effects on societies worldwide.

UN ACTIONS

UNODC WORLD DRUG REPORT

Analyzes global drug trends, production, trafficking routes, and policy responses.

The 2024 report highlights:

2,757 tons of cocaine produced in 2022 (20% increase from 2021).

292 million drug users in 2022 (20% rise in the past decade).

Synthetic drugs, particularly methamphetamine and fentanyl, are increasing in availability and potency.

Drug-related deaths have surged, largely due to the opioid crisis and fentanyl contamination.

Cannabis remains the most widely used drug, with a rise in both legal and illegal markets.

The report provides evidence-based insights to guide policymakers and law enforcement agencies.

INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL CONVENTIONS

Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)

Establishes international drug scheduling to control opiates, cannabis, and coca.

Requires governments to regulate legal medical and scientific uses of narcotics.

Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971)

Extends control to synthetic drugs such as amphetamines, barbiturates, and LSD.

Addresses growing pharmaceutical abuse and the rise of lab-made drugs.

UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)

Strengthens measures against drug trafficking, money laundering, and precursor chemical trade.

Encourages extradition and legal cooperation among nations.

Establishes guidelines for asset forfeiture and financial sanctions against traffickers.

PARIS PACT INITIATIVE

Aims to curb Afghan opiate production and trafficking, which supplies 80%+ of global heroin.

Over 80 countries and organizations collaborate to tackle key drug routes, criminal networks, and funding sources.

Focuses on four main pillars:

Enhancing regional cooperation between Central Asia, Russia, Europe, and the Middle East.

Disrupting financial networks that fund drug trafficking.

Preventing diversion of precursor chemicals used in heroin production.

Reducing drug demand and improving treatment services.

Supports intelligence-sharing, joint operations, and capacity-building programs for law enforcement.

CONTAINER CONTROL PROGRAMME (CCP)

A joint initiative of UNODC and the World Customs Organization to prevent drug trafficking via shipping containers.

Establishes specialized port control units to detect concealed drug shipments, counterfeit goods, and weapons.

Uses risk assessment, X-ray scanning, and AI-based profiling to identify suspicious cargo.

Operates in 90+ countries, training customs officers to intercept illicit shipments without disrupting legitimate trade.

Helps uncover links between drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, including terrorism financing.

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Provide economic alternatives to communities reliant on drug crop cultivation. Aim to reduce illicit crop production by offering farmers legal and sustainable livelihoods.

Support agriculture diversification into crops like coffee, cacao, rubber, and fruits.

Strengthen market access, infrastructure, and financial inclusion for rural farmers.

Example:

In Peru and Colombia, farmers receive support to transition from coca to cacao and coffee farming.

In Afghanistan, projects encourage saffron cultivation as an alternative to opium poppies.

Promote community development, education, and healthcare to break the cycle of poverty and drug dependence.

COMPREHENSIVE GLOBAL DRUG CONTROL APPROACH

Combines law enforcement, international cooperation, demand reduction, and alternative development.

Tackles both drug supply chains and public health challenges.

Encourages multilateral responses, intelligence-sharing, and stronger legal frameworks.

Addresses new threats, such as dark web drug markets, synthetic opioids, and designer drugs.

Aims for a balanced approach that integrates security, economic, and public health strategies.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Enhancing intelligence-sharing and diplomatic efforts is crucial in the global fight against drug trafficking. Countries are increasingly collaborating through international agencies like Interpol, Europol, and UNODC, facilitating real-time information exchange and cross-border investigations. Bilateral and multilateral agreements are strengthening legal frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance, and synchronized law enforcement operations. Regional task forces, such as the Maritime Drug Enforcement Initiative in the Caribbean and the Triangular Cooperation on Cocaine in Africa, Latin America, and Europe, are helping dismantle trafficking networks operating across

continents. By improving diplomatic ties and fostering a shared commitment to combating drug-related crime, international actors can coordinate joint raids, intelligence-led interceptions, and policy harmonization efforts to disrupt the global narcotics trade.

TARGETING FINANCIAL NETWORKS

Drug cartels and trafficking syndicates rely on complex financial networks to launder illicit profits, often using offshore accounts, cryptocurrency transactions, and shell companies. Governments and financial institutions are stepping up their anti-money laundering (AML) regulations, enforcing stricter Know Your Customer (KYC) policies to track and freeze suspicious transactions linked to drug proceeds. Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) are being strengthened to detect patterns of illicit financial flows and coordinate asset forfeiture measures. Technological innovations like AI-driven fraud detection systems and blockchain tracing are improving financial transparency, allowing authorities to seize cartel assets, disrupt underground banking channels, and dismantle the financial backbone of drug trafficking operations. By crippling these economic structures, law enforcement agencies can significantly weaken the operational capabilities of organized crime groups.

HARM REDUCTION POLICIES

Many countries are shifting towards harm reduction approaches to address drug use as a public health issue rather than a criminal offense. Decriminalization policies, such as those implemented in Portugal and Switzerland, have led to lower rates of overdose deaths, HIV infections, and drug-related incarcerations. Supervised consumption sites, needle exchange programs, and opioid substitution therapies (e.g., methadone and buprenorphine) provide safer alternatives for drug users while reducing the strain on healthcare and prison systems. Expanding community-based rehabilitation centers and mental health support services ensures that individuals struggling with addiction receive personalized treatment rather than punitive measures. Countries like Canada and Australia have adopted nationwide naloxone distribution programs, preventing thousands of overdose fatalities. A well-rounded harm reduction strategy prioritizes education, prevention, and reintegration, helping users break free from dependency while addressing the social determinants of addiction.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and biometric surveillance is transforming the fight against drug trafficking. AI-powered predictive analytics and risk profiling allow customs authorities and border security agencies to identify high-risk shipments and suspicious travel patterns with greater accuracy. Blockchain technology is improving supply chain transparency in the pharmaceutical sector, preventing the diversion of precursor chemicals into illicit drug production. Advanced surveillance systems, including automated cargo scanners, drone patrols, and facial recognition at border crossings, enhance drug interdiction efforts while reducing reliance on manual inspections. Law enforcement agencies are also deploying dark web monitoring tools and cryptocurrency tracking software to disrupt online drug markets, where transactions often involve anonymous blockchain-based currencies like Bitcoin and Monero. As drug traffickers adapt to new technologies, governments must continue investing in digital forensics and cybersecurity measures to stay ahead of evolving threats.

EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Sustainable development plays a key role in reducing drug-related crime and illicit cultivation by providing vulnerable communities with economic alternatives and social support systems. Alternative development programs in Colombia, Peru, and Afghanistan have helped thousands of farmers transition from coca and opium poppy cultivation to legal crops like coffee, cacao, saffron, and rubber. Vocational training and microfinance initiatives allow at-risk youth to pursue education and stable employment, reducing their likelihood of being recruited by drug cartels. Community-led crime prevention strategies, such as youth mentorship programs, urban renewal projects, and restorative justice initiatives, have been effective in decreasing gang violence and drug abuse in cities like Medellín, Mexico City, and Cape Town. Governments and NGOs are also expanding public health services, housing assistance, and social reintegration programs for former drug users and ex-gang members, ensuring long-term rehabilitation and community resilience. Investing in education, infrastructure, and inclusive economic growth not only addresses the root causes of drug-related issues but also fosters safer, more stable societies.

COUNTRIES INVOLVED

COLOMBIA

Colombia is the largest producer of cocaine globally, with coca cultivation concentrated in remote regions like the Amazon basin and the Andes. The country's challenging geography, along with weak government presence in these areas, makes it difficult to control production. Cartels, such as the Medellín and Cali cartels (historically), and more recently the Clan del Golfo and FARC dissidents, manage large-scale trafficking operations that transport cocaine primarily to the United States and Europe. Colombia's government continues to implement eradication efforts, including aerial fumigation and manual crop destruction, but coca farmers often resort to cultivation due to the lack of alternative livelihood opportunities. The country's ongoing conflict with armed groups and the global demand for cocaine continue to perpetuate this illegal industry.

PERU

Peru is the second-largest producer of cocaine in the world, with cultivation areas primarily in the Amazon basin and the upper Huallaga Valley. Similar to Colombia, illegal drug production is linked to poverty and lack of state presence in rural regions. Despite efforts by the government to combat drug trafficking, such as crop substitution programs and military operations against narcotraffickers, coca leaf production remains a significant issue. Peru's government has initiated several programs aimed at transitioning coca farmers to legal agriculture, but it faces challenges, including limited access to markets and the remoteness of many farming communities. Drug cartels transport the processed cocaine from Peru through Colombia or Bolivia to international markets, primarily the United States and Europe.

BOLIVIA

Bolivia is also a key player in coca leaf production, primarily used for cocaine manufacture. The country's coca-growing regions are located in the Yungas and Tropics of Cochabamba, where coca leaf is traditionally used for cultural and medicinal purposes. However, Bolivia faces significant challenges in controlling the illicit cocaine trade, as drug traffickers exploit local communities for cultivation. In recent years, Bolivia has pursued policies to reduce coca leaf production, such as legalization of a controlled amount for traditional use and eradication programs. The country has also tried to

implement alternative development programs aimed at reducing dependence on illicit coca farming by promoting sustainable agriculture like cacao and coffee. Despite these efforts, Bolivia remains a significant exporter of cocaine to international markets.

AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium, which is processed into heroin and trafficked through various routes to Europe, Russia, and Asia. The country's opium poppy cultivation is primarily concentrated in the Helmand province and Kunar valley, regions plagued by instability, poverty, and insurgent control. The Taliban has been historically linked to the production and trafficking of opium, which funds their operations. Despite international efforts to eradicate poppy fields, Afghanistan's poppy trade is resilient due to high demand for heroin and opioids globally. The United Nations and other international agencies have invested in alternative development programs to help local farmers transition to legal crops, but security concerns and the country's economic challenges have hindered substantial progress.

MYANMAR

Myanmar is a major producer of opium and is among the world's top exporters of heroin. The Shan State in Myanmar's Golden Triangle region is a hub for opium poppy cultivation, where ethnic militias and drug syndicates control much of the trade. The country's political instability, ongoing conflicts, and lack of effective governance in remote areas contribute to the persistence of opium production. Myanmar is also becoming an increasingly important source for methamphetamine production, as well as for synthetic drugs such as methamphetamines and ecstasy. Drug trafficking from Myanmar flows into China, Thailand, India, and other countries in Southeast Asia, creating a growing public health and security concern across the region.

MEXICO

Mexico plays a central role as a transit hub for drugs, particularly cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and marijuana, destined for the United States. Mexican cartels, such as the Sinaloa, CJNG (Jalisco Nueva Generación), and Zetas, have established extensive trafficking operations across the U.S.-Mexico border. These cartels are involved in drug production, smuggling, and distribution, using drug tunnels, remote border regions, and coastal routes to facilitate the flow of illicit substances. The Sinaloa Cartel, historically the most powerful, has vast networks that move cocaine from South America through

Mexico and into the U.S. Methamphetamine production is also booming in Mexico, with labs in remote areas producing massive quantities for export to both the U.S. and other markets. The ongoing violence between cartels and the Mexican government complicates efforts to control the flow of illicit drugs.

WEST AFRICA

West Africa has emerged as a key transshipment point for cocaine smuggled from South America to Europe. Countries like Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Senegal serve as major drug trafficking hubs, where cartels use airports, shipping ports, and corrupt officials to facilitate the movement of drugs. Cocaine is typically flown from South American ports to West African airports, and from there, it is transported to Europe, particularly Spain, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. The growing influence of organized crime in the region has led to increased violence and instability, with drug-related corruption contributing to weak governance. While drug use within West Africa is less of a problem compared to the trafficking, the region's role as a hub in the global drug trade has significant socio-political implications.

BALKANS

The Balkans have long been a critical route for heroin trafficking from Asia to Europe, particularly through countries such as Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia. Heroin produced in Afghanistan is transported through Turkey and Eastern Europe, with the Balkans serving as a major distribution point. The region's organized crime groups facilitate this trade, often collaborating with drug syndicates from Turkey and Russia. The area is also becoming increasingly important in the trafficking of synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamines and ecstasy, due to rising demand in Western Europe. The Balkans' role as a trafficking corridor contributes to regional instability and has fueled conflicts over smuggling routes and control of drug production sites.

UNITED STATES

The United States is the world's largest consumer of illicit drugs, with a high demand for cocaine, opioids, fentanyl, and methamphetamine. The opioid crisis has significantly increased the demand for synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, which is largely manufactured in China and smuggled through

Mexico. Cocaine, although less consumed than opioids, is still widely trafficked into the U.S. from Colombia via Mexico. The methamphetamine market has also grown, with Mexico being a primary producer. Efforts to combat the drug trade are hindered by the vastness of the country's drug markets, the sophistication of cartel operations, and the growing problem of synthetic drug abuse.

UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom is a significant market for cocaine and synthetic drugs like MDMA and ecstasy, particularly among urban youth. The U.K. has seen rising cocaine use over the years, particularly in cities such as London and Manchester, where the demand for party drugs and recreational narcotics is high. The country is also an important entry point for cocaine from South America, with large shipments entering through ports and airports. The Black Market for cocaine is deeply entrenched, contributing to ongoing law enforcement challenges and fueling the activities of organized crime in the region.

SPAIN

Spain serves as a primary entry point for cocaine coming from South America via West Africa, with Barcelona and Madrid being major trafficking centers. The country has faced increasing challenges with drug-related violence linked to the cartels, and Spanish ports are often used as conduits for large shipments. Spain also sees significant demand for ecstasy, methamphetamines, and other synthetic drugs. Law enforcement efforts to dismantle organized trafficking operations have led to international collaboration with authorities in Latin America and the European Union.

FRANCE

France has seen significant consumption of cocaine, with Paris being a major hub for drug trafficking in Europe. The country is a key market for cocaine, heroin, and synthetic drugs, particularly MDMA.

QUESTIONS

What are the primary security threats posed by international drug trafficking?

How can states balance enforcement policies with human rights considerations?

Should drug decriminalization be considered a viable solution to reduce violence?

How can corruption within governments and law enforcement be mitigated?

What role should international organizations play in addressing the financial networks behind drug cartels?

How can alternative development programs be improved to prevent illicit drug cultivation?

Should certain drug policies be globally standardized or left to national discretion?

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