

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT ON

UNODC PROGRAMME FOR CENTRAL ASIA FOR 2021-2025

I. Background

The UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia (ROCA) supports the Central Asian and Southern Caucasus countries in reducing the use and trade of illicit drugs, countering organized crime and corruption, as well as, in preventing terrorism. The UNODC Regional Office is located in Tashkent and has seven Programme Offices in Astana and Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), Ashgabat (Turkmenistan), Baku (Azerbaijan) and Tbilisi (Georgia). UNODC's presence in Central Asia began in 1993 with the establishment of the UNODC ROCA in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Currently, ROCA is implementing UNODC Programme for Central Asia 2015-2020, which represents the overarching strategic framework under which UNODC provides technical assistance in the region. This programme was developed in collaboration with Member States through a deliberate consultation process. The Programme for Central Asia 2015-2020 was the first attempt of ROCA to bring stand-alone subject specific programmes, inter-regional programmes, global programmes, as well as shorter term projects in the regions under one integrated programme, to deliver more structured and efficient aid to Member States.

The last five years of implementation of Programme for Central Asia demonstrated that integrated programming approach a) increased the counterpart cooperation, ownership and funding; b) brought better visibility to the work that UNODC is doing; c) linked the stand alone programmes together, in order to ensure that they all contribute to the common goal; d) provided opportunity to better monitor and assess the results, as well as enhanced the result based reporting.

In this regard, ROCA would like to present the concept of the next cycle of the Programme for the region. Three out of five countries in the region have UNDAF¹ cycles for 2016-2020, which means that new UNSDCF² cycle would cover the period of 2021-2025. In order to synchronize the ROCA programme cycle with the UNSDCFs in the region, which would allow to deliver more coordinated support to Member States in better coherence with other UN sister agencies, it is proposed that next cycle of the Programme for Central Asia would cover the period of 2021-2025.

II. Contextual analysis and challenges

Central Asian region is experiencing a significant transformation. The pace of interaction among the countries in the region has grown considerably and this provides opportunities for greater regional cooperation, the resolution of border disputes and regional security. However, the threats to safety and security concerns are broadly similar in Central Asian countries, and the challenges faced by countries of the region include organized crime, illicit drug and precursor trafficking, trafficking in persons, corruption and illicit financial flows, equal access to justice, rule of law, and the spread of violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism. One of the main opiate trafficking routes from Afghanistan, the Northern Route, goes through Central Asian countries, which fuels the risk of organized crime and use of illicit drugs in the region. Likewise, the activation of trade and transit corridors in the region and softening of border crossing regimes are among other factors that would multiply the risks of misuse of emerging trade and transit corridors for illicit trafficking.

Organized crime and illicit trafficking: The countries in the region express their concerns on potential exploitation of emerging trade and transit corridors and networks by transnational organized crime groups for drug and human trafficking and other nefarious purposes. The transnational criminal networks have no respect for international borders, and they are very adaptive to occurring changes and devise innovative methods to traffic drugs, smuggle people and various goods, including counterfeit medicine, weapons and natural resources. The high profit margins and an abundance of cash make the

¹ United Nations Development Assistance Framework

² United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

illicit trafficking very seductive, and the effect of the criminal networks in the region is felt along the entire trafficking route, providing destabilizing effects on local economies.

Drug problems: The movement of drugs along the Northern Route fuels local drug demand in the region as well as criminal activities associated with it. Short-term withdrawal treatment still remains as the main type of service offered, and long-term inpatient care and outpatient treatment are generally hardly available. Compulsory registration at narcological dispensary hinders the accessibility of services and fuels the stigmatization of drug users and discrimination against them. Though the number of newly diagnosed injecting-transmitted cases in all new HIV cases is declining gradually, the new cases of sexually transmitted HIV is increasing, and some reports indicate that these transmissions are partially transmitted by partners who use psychotropic substances.

Despite the overall trend of increasing illicit opium production in Afghanistan, seizures of opiates across countries of the northern route have been gradually declining since 2004. The northern route accounted for only 1% of global quantities of heroin and morphine seized during 2016-2018, a significant drop from 10% in 2008. Since 2015, the disparity between the trends in production and seizures has become even more evident. The total amount of seizures of heroin across Central Asian countries, the South Caucasus and the Russian Federation fell by almost 87%, from 8.8 tons in 2008 to 1.2 tons in 2017. In 2018, the seizures slightly increased in Tajikistan, the Russian Federation and Georgia; and significantly increased in Azerbaijan.

Corruption: Central Asian countries recognize corruption as a complex social, political and economic phenomenon, and addressing this issue is on a high agenda of the governments. Though there is no evident data, different global corruption perception indexes rank the countries in the region at different levels, which indicate that there are issues that need to be addressed related to this phenomenon. Together with the illicit financial flows, the corruption is eroding the effectiveness of state control in the region.

Terrorism: Recent developments in the recruitment, return and cross-border movement of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) present pressing challenges for criminal justice systems of Central Asian states. In 2019, several Central Asian countries conducted special humanitarian operations to bring their nationals back from the Syrian conflict zone. In total 609 citizens of Kazakhstan were returned from Syria and Iraq, Tajikistan repatriated 84 children, and Uzbekistan brought back in total 220 citizens.

Criminal Justice: Central Asian countries rank differently on rule of law and judicial reforms related indexes. However, all these countries prioritize access to justice, and put extra efforts to ensure rule of law. Most of the ongoing reforms in this area are aimed at developing the capacity and standards of state institutions, ensuring the independence of the judiciary system, enhancing the access to justice, fair trial and humane conditions of detention.

Research and trends analysis: The Central Asian countries need further support in enhancing the capacity to generate quality evidence, data collection, and analysis on crime, drugs, corruption and terrorism issues. Though all these areas are highlighted as a priority in each country, there is a need for further enhancement of normative and technical bases to ensure evidence-based policy development. There is also a need to further train the local experts on research, analysis and forensics.

III. National consultation in Central Asian Countries to identify the priorities for inclusion into new UNODC Programme

As a first step in development of new Programme for the region for 2021-2025, UNODC would like to conduct series of national consultations in each Central Asian countries to review emerging challenges related to drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism in the region, as well as discuss country priorities for 2021-2025. The identified challenges and country priorities would be considered in developing the plans for cooperation under UNODC Programme for Central Asia for the period of 2021-2025. These meetings are expected to be conducted in collaboration with key government institutions, including (but not limited) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Security Services, the General

Prosecutor's Office, the Financial Police, Drug Control Agencies, the Border Services, the Customs Services, the Forensic labs, and other relevant organizations.

IV. The proposed programme response

To address abovementioned issues and challenges, ROCA would like to propose following programme areas, which are aligned with Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and UNODC's global strategy and vision. The proposed programmatic response will look through guiding programming principles, to ensure that no one left behind, gender equality is promoted, human rights due diligence is incorporated, and sustainable and resilient development is achieved in the region. Considering abovementioned, the following broad areas of cooperation could be considered for UNODC Programme for Central Asia 2021-2025:



The following possible components could be considered for inclusion under each area:

Countering transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking: *Ratification, implementation and implementation review of the UNTOC; Criminal intelligence and information sharing; Border management; Container control; Trafficking in persons and Smuggling of migrants; Cyber-crime; Illicit firearm trafficking; Trafficking in cultural property; Wildlife and forest crime; Falsified medical products; Mutual legal assistance and extradition, legal and normative assistance.*

Strengthening comprehensive and balanced approach to drug problems: *Ratification, implementation and implementation review of the UN drug conventions; National drug control strategies, policies; Regional and international cooperation on drug issues; Prevention of drug use; Treatment of drug use disorders; HIV associated with drug use and prison settings; Overdose prevention; Access to controlled substances for treatment of pain and palliative care; Precursors control; Supply reduction and law enforcement; Darknet and drug trafficking; Cross-border cooperation: MOU, CARICC, BLO, CCP, Trade and Transit corridors, etc.*

Countering Corruption and Financial Crimes: *Ratification, implementation and implementation review of UNCAC; Anti-corruption policies and strategies; Corruption prevention and integrity education; International cooperation; Mutual legal assistance and extradition; Asset recovery; Integrity in justice sector; Corruption in specific areas/sectors; Economic fraud and identity related crime; countering money laundering and terrorist financing (AML/CFT).*

Preventing and countering terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization: *Ratification, implementation and implementation review of international legal instrument against terrorism; Legal and normative assistance; International cooperation; counter the use of internet for terrorist purposes; Countering terrorist financing; Returning foreign terrorist fighters; Repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children returning from conflict zones; Prevention of radicalization to terrorism in prisons and managing terrorist and violent extremist prisoners; Reintegration and alternatives to imprisonment for returnees; Mutual legal assistance and extradition.*

Strengthening Crime prevention, Justice and Rule of Law: *Implementation of the CPCJ international standards and norms; Crime prevention; Police reform; Prosecution services; Judiciary; Access to legal defence*

and legal aid; Prison reform and alternatives to imprisonments; Restorative justice; Justice for children; Support and assistance to victims; Education for Justice; Gender in criminal justice system; Violence against women; Crime data and statistics; International crime classification for statistics purposes; Criminal legislation; Community policing; Social cohesion; Urban safety; Cross-border cooperation on crime prevention and rule of law.

Research, trend analysis and forensics: Evidence generation and data collection on crime and drugs; Support in data submission to global questionnaires: ARQ, GloTIP, UN-IAFQ, UN-CTS, NPS, IDS, etc.; Evidence generation (researches, studies, surveys, and analysis); Forensics; Knowledge management and documentation; South-South cooperation; support in SDG implementation.

V. Explore possible inclusion of South Caucasus to ROCA Programme 2021-2025 with Member States

Considering common history and past of Central Asian and South Caucasus countries, as well as, the similarity of security threats, UNODC suggests, based on consent of all Parties, inclusion of South Caucasus region into next cycle of the UNODC Programme for Central Asia 2021-2025. This is also supported by the fact that the political and economic relations between these two sub-regions have been enhancing in recent years, and there is a greater possibility for further integration of the sub-regions due to emerging trade and transit corridors. Moreover, South Caucasus countries are part of the several existing regional initiatives, such as Memorandum of Understanding on Sub-regional drug control cooperation of 1996, CARICC, Memorandum of Understanding on Inter-Regional Network of Customs Authorities and Port Control Units, the Network of Prosecutors and Central Authorities from Source, Transit and Destination Countries to Combat Transnational Organized Crime in Central Asia and Southern Caucasus, and others. Inclusion of South Caucasus countries would also allow Central Asian countries to better practice knowledge and experience sharing between the sub-regions, through application of best practices in preventing drug, crime and terrorism.

VI. Proposed timeframe for programme development

Action/Months	Mar	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov-Dec
Submit the concept for review and approval to UNODC HQ							
Approval of concept by UNODC Executive Director							
National consultations in all countries of the region							
Formulation of the draft Programme document							
Circulation of draft Programme document among stakeholders							
Programme Steering Committee Meeting to discuss the draft Programme Document							
Submission of draft Programme Document to UNODC HQ and Member States							
Approval of the Programme by Member States and ExCom							
Programme is ready for signing and launch							