



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

14 July 2017

Excellency,

I am pleased to enclose herewith the summary of the High-Level Debate on Transnational Organized Crime (in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the assassination of Judge Giovanni Falcone), held on 19 June 2017.

The summary contains the main conclusions from the key messages expressed during the high-level opening segment along with the views shared by the panelists and Member States during the interactive panel discussions. It is my hope that these conclusions will motivate further action among all Member States, the UN system and other stakeholders, for more effective efforts towards finding practical and sustainable solutions to counter organized crime.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the delegations and institutions who participated in the event and supported it in various ways.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson', written in a cursive style.

Peter Thomson

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

General Assembly: High-Level Debate on Transnational Organized Crime (in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the assassination of Judge Giovanni Falcone)

New York, 19 June 2017

President's Summary

Introduction

The President of the General Assembly (PGA) convened a High-Level Debate on Transnational Organized Crime on Monday 19 June 2017. The debate was organized pursuant to GA resolution 71/1209, inviting the PGA, in cooperation with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, to a high level debate to observe the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Judge Giovanni Falcone, focusing on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNOTC) and the Protocols thereto, highlighting emerging trends and challenges in crime prevention and criminal justice and their impact on sustainable development. The PGA was also invited to prepare a summary of the discussion for transmission to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and to all Member States.

Key Messages

The one-day High-Level Debate consisted of an opening segment with high-level representatives, a high-level segment with interventions from Member States and two interactive panel discussions addressing challenges faced by the international community during the 15 years of implementation of UNTOC and current gaps, emerging trends and new challenges in crime prevention and criminal justice, respectively. Interventions from the floor followed both interactive panels with a closing segment concluding the event. The following are the key messages that were shared by participants throughout the High-level Debate:

Opening segment

All participants emphasized the bravery of Judge Falcone and his pivotal influence to the development of international crime prevention and criminal justice practices, while noting the ongoing work that is still required to address persisting challenges and to ensure that his legacy endures. Speakers also paid tribute to the role played by those who have sacrificed their lives in the fight against organized crime. Speakers recognized that achieving a world of peace and security, rule of law, human rights and sustainable development represented the core of Judge Falcone's vision and stressed that lifting people out of poverty could help to safeguard our societies against the destructive influences of crime and corruption. Speakers highlighted the growing nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism constitutes a serious threat to the security, stability and development of countries and regions. Speakers also noted that the demarcation between these global scourges is becoming increasingly blurred as terrorist groups become increasingly involved in illicit trafficking, including human beings, arms, narcotics, cultural artefacts, and money laundering practices and kidnapping.

Speakers recalled that the work that derives from UNTOC and its effective implementation is directly linked to the highest goals set by the international community in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. They acknowledged that it is within the spirit of the Convention to strive for more peaceful, just and inclusive societies by addressing the factors that generate violence, insecurity and injustice, such

as inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit flows of human beings, financial resources and weapons. Speakers welcomed the inclusion, among the priorities of the Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030, of the fight against all forms of organized crime, the reduction of flows of illicit capital and weapons, and the strengthening of the fight against criminal organizations.

First interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussion: “15 years of implementation of the Convention. Challenges facing the international community”

During the first multi-stakeholder panel discussion, participants discussed the progress that has been achieved during the last 15 years to implement the Palermo Convention. They further highlighted the interlinkages between organized crime, terrorism and corruption, with instability, poor governance and stagnant development outcomes. They shared examples of how organized crime has acted as a spoiler to sustainable development, and they reaffirmed the need for thorough implementation of the Convention and its additional Protocols, and highlighted the importance of working further to identify possible shared criteria to form the basis for the Convention's Review Mechanism. They emphasized the importance of addressing the root causes of organized crime, and of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including, in particular Goal 16, which recognizes the importance of addressing international crime, combating illicit flows and corruption, and promoting the rule of law to achieve just peaceful, and inclusive societies. And they affirmed the importance of pursuing a comprehensive approach to combating organized crime, with the participation of all key stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. Speakers consequently noted the importance of strengthening the work of and cooperation with civil society, particularly in the area of prevention, and to improve social innovation in order to act in a more agile fashion when addressing organized crime.

Participants noted the importance of establishing peaceful and corruption-free institutions. Organized crime and corrupt institutions could only be challenged if Member States displayed a collective will to do so, by addressing and targeting the root causes of organized crime, redoubling the efforts to implement UNTOC and its three Protocols, as well as the Convention against Corruption, and implementing appropriate capacity building efforts for all concerned national institutions. In this respect, participants lamented the lack of a unified approach in the implementation of UNTOC to the detriment of smaller states and, consequently, advocated for a more strategic focus to collectively address organized crime.

Participants highlighted UNODC's central role in assisting member states to implement UNOTC and the Protocols thereto as well as technical assistance to build the capacity of key national institutions to combat organized crime. They underscored the importance of international cooperation in fighting organized crime and recognized Judge Falcone's invaluable contribution in advancing criminal justice and crime prevention and increasing international judicial cooperation. They stressed that, as organized criminal networks span the globe, efforts to combat them must likewise cross borders to ensure that organized crime networks do not divert their activities to countries or regions where weak cooperation would translate in ineffective criminal justice responses.

Second interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussion: “Current gaps, emerging trends and new challenges in crime prevention and criminal justice”

During the second multi-stakeholder panel discussion on emerging gaps, trends and challenges in crime prevention and criminal justice responses to prevent and counter organized crime, participants further

underscored the urgent need to strengthen appropriate international and regional cooperation mechanisms to overcome this evolving global threat.

Participants stressed that one of the main challenges for States to effectively combatting transnational organized crime is the lack of universal adherence to the Convention and its Protocols, which would facilitate the harmonization of national legislation, in particular the criminalization and international cooperation provisions thereof. Effective implementation of these instruments was recognized as a second main challenge.

Participants acknowledged that, in addition to 'traditional' forms of organized crime, criminal groups are increasingly profiteering from emerging forms of organized crime, including cybercrime, wildlife and forest crimes, and trafficking in cultural property. Factoring in that organized crime forms a large basis for the financing of terrorism, the need for shared global efforts to defeat transnational organized crime was emphasized, including through the use of creative and innovative approaches, leveraging technological advances, and pursuing a comprehensive approach. Participants also affirmed that, in order to achieve a peaceful and sustainable world for all - one where justice, good governance, and rule of law prevails - Member States must be proactive in their approach to continuously strengthening tools to fight organized crime. They also called for all stakeholders to look for mutually-reinforcing opportunities to leverage global efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to strengthen crime prevention and criminal justice efforts. This includes strengthening law and judicial cooperation, promoting training and technical assistance, and providing necessary capacity-building for national authorities.

Participants also reiterated the importance of establishing a sound review mechanism for assisting States parties in the effective implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto. They further noted that such a mechanism would be an invaluable tool in identifying and substantiating specific needs so as to promote and facilitate the provision of technical assistance to address capacity-building needs relating to implementation of the Convention.

Participants emphasized the need to find appropriate systems to measure organized crime through the timely and regular collection of data, analysis and dissemination with the view to strengthening evidence-based responses to transnational organized crime. They also noted that the development of appropriate indicators would enhance Member States' knowledge on organized crime which would constitute a central factor for taking effective measures and reducing its human, social and economic consequences.

Conclusion

The High-level Debate featured informed and constructive contributions from panellists and Member States on the development of the concept of organized crime and its dramatic evolution since the adoption of the UNTOC and its three Protocols. The event also provided a unique opportunity to take stock of the persisting challenges and progress made to date in addressing organized crime in all its forms at global and regional levels. The event allowed for the consideration of a wide range of stakeholders, including Member States, international organizations and civil society - underlining the importance of a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and collaborative approach to finding practical and sustainable solutions to counter organized crime throughout the world.