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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Office of the President of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly presents its compliments to all Permanent Missions and Permanent Observer Missions to the United Nations and with regard to the special one-day High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on transnational organized crime under agenda items 104 and the informal panel discussion on transnational organized crime to be held in the General Assembly Hall on Thursday 17 June 2010, has the honour to attach herewith for your information a background note and programme outline.

The Office of the President of the General Assembly avails itself of this opportunity to renew to all Permanent Missions and Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations the assurance of its highest consideration.

New York, 6 June 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long tail.

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations

**High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on
Transnational Organized Crime
New York, 17 June 2010**

BACKGROUND NOTE

I. Introduction

2010 marks the 15th anniversary of the launch of the Global Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime (Naples Declaration) as well as the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and its additional Protocols¹.

Within this framework, Member States through General Assembly resolution A/RES/64/179 on 18 December 2009 requested the convening of a special one-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly on transnational organized crime. The resolution aims at fostering universal adherence to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto and at strengthening international cooperation. Through the same resolution, Member states that have not yet done so are urged to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention and the Protocols thereto. These instruments embody the commitment of the international community to join forces in order to tackle an international challenge with a global impact. The resolution also requests the Secretary-General to organize a special treaty event to promote ratification or accession to the Convention and the Protocols.

At present, 154 countries are States Parties to the Convention, whereas 136 countries have ratified or acceded to its Protocol on Human Trafficking; 122 to its Protocol on Migrant Smuggling; and 79 to its Protocol on Trafficking in Firearms². In spite of the advances in developing a global legal framework, Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) has increased. It is time for renewed political commitment to tackle this threat, allowing better visibility and prioritization of this issue in the broader UN agenda. The tenth anniversary of the Palermo Convention is meant to raise awareness of the threats posed by TOC, as well as the importance of the Convention and its Protocols. The high-level meeting of the General Assembly could also contribute to a successful outcome of the Conference of States Parties at its 5th meeting, to be held in Vienna from the 23 to the 26 of October 2010.

II. Background

While globalization has increased the movement of goods, services, capital, people and information, it has also has provided transnational organised crime an unprecedented opportunity for growth. Furthermore, as illustrated in a recent United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report³, instability produced by conflicts attracts crime, and crime deepens

¹ *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition.*

² *Status as of 11 February 2010. Source UNODC*

http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12&chapter=18&lang=en

³ UNODC – Crime and Instability. Case studies of transnational threats.

vulnerabilities, multiplying the impact of a wide range of destabilizing factors for international security. TOC is largely and increasingly network-based; operates in a variety of criminal markets which sometimes overlap and intersect; and is facilitated by links with licit institutions and legitimate actors. As a result, it represents a multifaceted, global phenomenon that undermines the Rule of Law, hinders legitimate economic activities, and obstructs economic and social development.

Some experts estimate that global organized crime and illicit trade accounts for about 10% of global GDP, an industry that reaps illegal profits of about one trillion dollars per year. Human trafficking has become a highly profitable business. The United Nations estimates the total market value of human trafficking at \$32 billion per year, of which about \$10 billion comes from the initial “sale” of individuals while the remainder represents the estimated profits made from the victims’ ongoing exploitation⁴. UNODC data suggests that the annual amount of money laundered globally amounts to 2% to 5% of global GDP⁵. The World Economic Forum highlights that counterfeited drugs represent almost 10% of the worldwide pharmaceuticals market, equivalent to \$35 billion in revenues per annum, causing millions of deaths each year⁶. These figures underscore the seriousness of the problem and support the need for international action and renewed political engagement by world leaders.

III. Provisional agenda

The high-level meeting will take place on 17 June in the General Assembly Hall. The meeting will consist of a formal plenary meeting and an informal panel discussion.

A. Opening of plenary meeting (9:45)

The plenary meeting will open at 9:45 in the General Assembly Hall. The President of the General Assembly and the U.N. Secretary-General will deliver statements. Member States are encouraged to participate at a high level.

B. Informal panel discussion: “Transnational Organized Crime as a Multidimensional Threat: how to promote a coherent and holistic response through the Universal Adherence to and full implementation of the Palermo Convention and its Protocols” (10:30 am – 1 pm)

The panel will consist of invited speakers, including the Minister of the Interior of Italy, the Attorney General of Mexico, the Minister of Justice of France, the Secretary-General of Interpol, leading academics and members of civil society, who will engage in an informal exchange with Member States. Issues that may be discussed in this panel include: analysis of the new trends and emerging forms of TOC; their impact on social and economic development and human rights; the increasing links among transnational criminal organizations and other non conventional threats; the mainstreaming of the prevention and response to TOC into the United Nations agenda in development, security, peace-building and Rule of Law; the need for global political commitment in fighting TOC; the benefits and opportunities provided by the UN TOC convention, particularly as a tool for promoting international legal cooperation; challenges faced by State parties to make

⁴ http://www.unodc.org/documents/about-unodc/AR08_WEB.pdf

⁵ <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/globalization.html>

⁶ <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/globalrisk/globalrisks2010.pdf>

full use of the TOC Convention and the Protocols thereto; the implementation of a consistent range of technical assistance and capacity-building activities to upgrade criminal justice systems in vulnerable countries.

A panel discussion within the framework of the General Assembly will bring much needed political attention to the problem posed by TOC. It will allow for productive discussion on the crucial importance of the Palermo Convention and Protocols thereto to strengthen international coordination and cooperation and deal more effectively with all forms of TOC, as well as the need to double efforts to achieve universal ratification of such instruments in the near future.

C. Formal plenary meeting resumed (3pm – 6pm)

The formal plenary meeting will resume with statements from Member States.

IV. Impact

The President of the General Assembly will circulate to Member States a summary of the panel discussion to ensure that the information and the views presented will be properly reflected for future reference. Member States may consider further proposals aimed at fostering universal adherence to the Convention against TOC and the Protocols thereto and at strengthening international cooperation, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/179.