



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

23 May 2017

Excellency,

Further to my letter dated 18 April 2017 and in accordance with resolution 71/209, please find attached the concept note, technical abstract and a tentative programme for the high-level debate to observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of the assassination of Judge Giovanni Falcone, focusing on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and the Protocols thereto and highlighting emerging trends and challenges in crime prevention and criminal justice and their impact on sustainable development. This debate will take place as a one-day meeting, on Monday 19 June 2017. I encourage Member States to be represented at the highest possible level at this meeting.

As previously informed, this high-level debate will consist of an opening segment, high-level statements, two interactive panel discussions and concluding remarks. In accordance with resolution 71/209, a President's summary of the discussion will be prepared for transmission to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and to all Member States.

Further information will be made available on my website. For additional details, please contact Senior Legal Advisor Alejandro Sousa at [sousaa@un.org](mailto:sousaa@un.org)

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson'.

Peter Thomson

To All Permanent Representatives  
and Permanent Observers of the United Nations  
New York

## High-Level Debate on Transnational Organized Crime

*in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the assassination of Judge Giovanni Falcone*

19 June 2017

UN Headquarters, New York

This High Level Debate will be held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/209, which includes an invitation to *“the President of the General Assembly, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, to hold, within existing resources and after the completion of the twenty-sixth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, a high-level debate to observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of the assassination of Judge Giovanni Falcone, focusing on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and the Protocols thereto and highlighting emerging trends and challenges in crime prevention and criminal justice and their impact on sustainable development, and to prepare a President’s summary of the discussion for transmission to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and to all Member States.”*

### **Scope and objective:**

Italian Judge Giovanni Falcone, who dedicated his life to fighting organized crime, took part in the very first meeting of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in April 1992. One month later, on 23 May, Judge Falcone, his wife Francesca Morvillo, and three policemen—Rocco Dicillo, Antonio Montinaro, and Vito Schifani—were killed by a roadside bomb planted by the Mafia.

Judge Falcone's insights, formed by his long battle with organized crime, led to greater international cooperation, financial investigations, witness protection, as well as to the return of proceeds to the people and communities victimized by criminals. His assassination galvanized the international community and led to the General Assembly’s endorsing Italy's proposal to host the first international conference on transnational organized crime. The outcome of that conference, the Palermo Convention, came into force in December 2003, and has 187 states parties today.

The Convention is supplemented by three Protocols that target specific areas and manifestations of organized crime<sup>1</sup> and *“represents the most important tools of the international community for fighting transnational organized crime.”* (GA Res. 71/209 OP5). States that ratify these instruments pledge to taking a series of measures against transnational organized crime, including the creation of domestic criminal offences (participation in an organized criminal group, money laundering, corruption and obstruction of justice); the adoption of new and sweeping frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance and law enforcement cooperation; and the promotion of training and technical assistance for building or upgrading the necessary capacity of national authorities. Criminal groups have been quick to embrace today’s globalized economy and its sophisticated technology. Through enhanced international cooperation, the international community can have a real impact on hampering the ability of international criminals to operate successfully and can assist citizens everywhere in their often bitter struggle for safety and dignity in their homes and communities. The Convention thus provides a global framework to address the scourge of crime as a global problem.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *The 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.*

<sup>2</sup> Secretary General’s foreword to the Convention.

This debate will focus on the priorities, gaps and emerging issues that require further attention and support in the implementation of the “Palermo Convention” and the nexus between the Convention and the sustainable development agenda - both from the point of view of national policies and international cooperation.

The debate will also pay tribute to victims and survivors of organized crime, in particular Judge Falcone and others who have paid the ultimate price in fulfilling our shared responsibility to counter transnational organized crime.

**Background:**

In the past ten years, a number of UN documents, reports and surveys have reflected the increasing importance of robust implementation of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the intrinsic link between sustainable development and effective and accessible criminal justice systems and institutions.<sup>3</sup>

In the Doha Declaration on *Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice into the Wider United Nations Agenda to Address Social and Economic Challenges and to Promote the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, and Public Participation*, adopted by the Thirteenth Congress, Member States pledged to strengthen international cooperation in crime prevention and assure that criminal justice systems are effective, fair, humane and accountable, and ultimately prevent and counter all crimes (GA Res. 70/174 Annex at OP8). Members States reiterated “*the importance of promoting peaceful, corruption-free and inclusive societies for sustainable development, with a focus on a people-centred approach that provides access to justice for all and builds effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*” (GA Res. 70/174 Annex at OP4).

These principles are echoed in Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

More recently, Member States reiterated that “*The rule of law and development are strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing and that the advancement of the rule of law at the national and international levels, including through crime prevention and criminal justice mechanisms, is essential for sustained and inclusive economic growth and sustainable development and the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms*” (GA Res. 71/209). They also stressed the importance of strengthened international cooperation to counter transnational organized crime, including money-laundering, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons, and trafficking in arms and other forms of organized crime. Law enforcement cooperation and information exchange are deemed vital, as are designated central authorities and dedicated contact points to facilitate international cooperation procedures (including for mutual legal assistance requests). The coordinating role of relevant regional networks and organizations is also recognized.

Finally, GA Resolution 71/209 expresses concerns over “*the growing links, in some cases, between forms of transnational organized crime and terrorism,*” and recognizes that “*countering transnational organized crime and terrorism is a common and shared responsibility,*” while confirming that UNODC is playing an essential role in assisting Member States.

The Security Council has expressed similar concerns in recent resolutions, mainly 2195 (2014), 2322 (2016), 2331 (2016) and 2347 (2017). These resolutions stress that “*The development and maintenance of fair and effective criminal justice systems should be a part of any strategy to counter terrorism and transnational organized crime,*” recalling the United Nations Convention against

<sup>3</sup> In 2005, the General Assembly expressed “*grave concern at the negative effects on development, peace and security and human rights posed by transnational crime.*” (See GA Res. 60/1 at par. 111, 2005 World Summit Outcome Document). In June 2012, the General Assembly held a Thematic Debate on “*Drugs and Crime as a Threat to Development*” in which participants highlighted the need to further integrate criminal justice and crime prevention into the broader work of the United Nations. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime recognized, inter alia, “*The negative effects of organized crime on society in general, in particular on sustainable development.*” (See Article 30(1)).

Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto (Res. 2347). Consistently, Member States are called upon to make criminal activities *“that may benefit organized criminal groups, terrorists or terrorist groups, as a serious crime in accordance with article 2(b) of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime”* (Res. 2347).

**Format and Outcome:**

This one-day High-Level Debate will consist of an opening session in the morning followed by morning and afternoon interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions, and then a closing segment by the President of the General Assembly. A President’s Summary will be made available to all Member States and stakeholders. It will also be transmitted to the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The opening is expected to feature remarks by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Chair of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Chair of the Conference of Parties of the Convention, and the Executive-Director of UNODC. There will also be a brief ceremony in remembrance of Judge Falcone. Maria Falcone, Judge Falcone's sister and President of the Giovanni e Francesca Falcone Foundation, will attend the ceremony.

The interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions will include Member States representatives, as well as experts from law enforcement, civil society, academia, think tanks, private sector, media, scientific community, financial institutions, international organizations.

The first multi-stakeholder panel discussion will focus on the 15 years of implementation of the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime: the importance and the incremental use of its tools in international cooperation, including good practices and recent connections with counter-terrorism actions.

Finally, the second multi-stakeholder panel discussion will focus on current gaps, emerging trends and new challenges in crime prevention and criminal justice.

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

19 June 2017, UN Headquarters, New York

Technical abstract

This High Level Debate is convened by the President of the General Assembly pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/209.

Italian Judge Giovanni Falcone, who dedicated his life to fighting organized crime took part in the very first meeting of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in April 1992. One month later, on 23 May, Judge Falcone, his wife and three policemen were killed by the Mafia. Judge Falcone's assassination and legacy galvanized the international community, and led to the General Assembly's endorsing Italy's proposal to host the first international conference on transnational organized crime. The fruit of that conference, the Palermo Convention, came into force in December 2003, and has 187 states parties today.

The Convention and its Protocols represent "*the most important tools of the international community for fighting transnational organized crime*"<sup>1</sup> and provide the framework to address the scourge of crime as a global and evolving problem.

This debate will focus on priorities, gaps and emerging issues that require further attention, as well as challenges in the implementation of the Convention. It will also address the nexus between the Convention and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both from the point of view of national policies and international cooperation. The debate will also pay tribute to Judge Falcone and other victims of organized crime.

**Format and Outcome:**

This one-day High-Level Debate will consist of an opening segment in the morning followed by morning and afternoon interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions, and then a closing segment by the President of the General Assembly. A President's Summary will subsequently be available to all Member States and stakeholders, and transmitted to the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The opening is expected to feature remarks by the **President of the General Assembly**, the **Secretary-General**, the **Chair of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice**, the **Chair of the Conference of Parties** to the Convention, and the **Executive-Director of UNODC**. There will also be a brief ceremony in remembrance of Judge Falcone. This will be followed by a **High Level Segment** where Member States represented at the appropriate level will be able to intervene.

---

<sup>1</sup> (GA Res. 71/209 OP5)

The interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions will include Member States representatives, as well as experts from law enforcement, civil society, international organizations and other stakeholders. Member States are encouraged to engage interactively, while *Papersmart* services will be available to upload written versions of their statements.

### Tentative Programme

Monday 19 June, Trusteeship Council Chamber	
10:00 – 10:30 a.m.	<p><b>Opening segment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations (tbc)</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Mitsuru Kitano, Chair of the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations (Vienna)</li> <li>• H.E. Ms Pilar Saborio de Rocafort, President of 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations (Vienna)</li> <li>• USG Yury Fedotov, Executive-Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)</li> </ul> <p><b>Brief remembrance moment (4 minutes):</b> Remembrance in honor of Judge Falcone and other officials (public servants) who were victims of organized crime.</p>
10.30 – 11.15 a.m.	<b>High-level segment with interventions from Member States (5 minutes each)</b>
11.15–1.00 p.m.	<b>First Interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussion (15 years of implementation of the Convention. Challenges facing the international community)</b> Member States and Civil Society representative (tbc)
Lunch break	
3.00-5.50p.m.	<b>Second Interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussion (Current gaps, emerging trends and new challenges in crime prevention and criminal justice)</b> Member States and Civil Society representative (tbc)
5.50–6.00 p.m	<b>Closing remarks by the President of the General Assembly</b>