



Embargo Until Time of Delivery

**Briefing by the Director of the United Nations Interregional
Crime and Justice Research Institute**

**Management Segment of the United Nations Economic and
Social Council**

Item 20: United Nations research and training institutes

United Nations Headquarters, New York

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Madam Chair, Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege to join you today to deliver this oral briefing on behalf of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).

I would like to commence by expressing my gratitude to Italy for hosting UNICRI for more than 50 years, providing the Institute with a much-needed stable foundation in Italy to carry out our action-oriented research and evidence-based programmes that further our shared goals enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I am also grateful to the Permanent Mission of Italy in New York for supporting UNICRI over the past 18 months to take critical institutional steps that led to today's formal briefing.

Indeed, being here today – alongside our sister Research and Training Institutes – is a milestone for us. Traditionally, UNICRI reported to ECOSOC only through the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in Vienna, which limited our visibility over the years with ECOSOC, our parent organ. With the adoption of decision 2022/338, we now have the opportunity to address you directly. We value this opportunity since it allows us to share insights from our extensive research and training in the field of crime prevention, justice, and the rule of law and to feed these insights into broader UN system-wide processes, such as the 2023 SDG Summit. It also allows us to demonstrate how we can support Member States through specialized research and tailor-made programmes.

I would now like to briefly share highlights from UNICRI's work in 2022:

2022 was an important year for UNICRI because we developed a new [Strategic Programme Framework](#) for the period of 2023 to 2026. This framework was

developed through a comprehensive and inclusive process, entailing extensive consultations with Member States and stakeholders – from United Nations entities to academia, civil society, and private sector partners. It is framed around five interconnected strategic priorities related to justice and security, plus three cross-cutting themes of youth, gender, and climate change, which guide all our research and capacity-building support to Member States.

In 2022 we also continued to positively research, pilot, test, analyze, and deliver our mandate. I am pleased to share that we launched 11 new projects, released 24 research reports, led 45 training programmes, reaching more than 2,000 beneficiaries across the globe, and conducted countless expert-level workshops as part of our 30 ongoing programmes and projects. All of UNICRI's work contributes to efforts to further SDG 16, in particular, to prevent and counter crime, strengthen the rule of law, and build safer and more resilient societies.

I would also like to highlight successes related to relevant themes for ECOSOC:

First, *cultural heritage*. In March 2022, UNICRI had the honour to facilitate the [repatriation of several cultural artifacts](#) illegally removed from Libya. While these 2000-year-old artifacts are valued at several million US dollars, they are priceless to the people and culture of Libya. This complex endeavour by several important partners was a victory for Libya, as well as for international law enforcement and the rule of law. Yet this is just the tip of the iceberg. Our research shows an urgent need for international cooperation and innovative strategies to combat trafficking and smuggling and to protect our invaluable cultural heritage.

Second, *climate change*. [Research conducted by UNICRI in the Sahel](#) gives voice to individuals affected by climate change and provides first-hand evidence of the

role climate change and degradation of natural resources have in exacerbating local conflicts, as well as the impact of climate change on recruitment narratives by violent extremist groups. UNICRI's report is more than 'just' research; it defines guiding principles for how the UN system should frame future prevention and counter violent extremism interventions (P/CVE) so that we take into account the linkages between climate change and violent extremism.

Third, *technology and innovation*. The use of facial recognition technology is arguably one of the most controversial applications of new technology. [Action-oriented research conducted by the UNICRI Centre for AI in The Hague](#) demonstrates that we can strike a balance between, on the one hand, the exigencies of law enforcement to innovate and use new technologies to investigate criminal activities, and, on the other hand, the need to address human rights concerns raised by critics about this controversial technology.

Tomorrow, in Singapore, UNICRI and INTERPOL will release the next milestone work in this domain – our [Toolkit for Responsible AI Innovation in Law Enforcement](#), which defines principles and practical guidance for responsible AI innovation in law enforcement that is both human rights and ethics compliant.

As an exclusively voluntary funded entity, all our results are made possible by the support of our host country, donors, and partners, to whom we are deeply grateful. You enable UNICRI to contribute to our shared vision of a safer world, free from violence and crime.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, I would like to briefly share with you a forthcoming initiative. UNICRI has launched a new flagship SDG 16 publication that will highlight key trends and emerging issues from the perspective of crime prevention, criminal justice, and the rule of law. Our first publication will be released in September on the margins of the SDG Summit. It will focus on the digital divide and its impact on SDG 16. I hope the insights we share will be a valuable contribution to our collective efforts to achieve the SDGs.

We look forward to deepening our engagement in these chambers of ECOSOC and to exploring new partnerships with all Member States. We further appreciate your support on the next agenda item, which is the first resolution encouraging UNICRI and its work.

Thank you.