



33rd Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Introduction to the new UNODC-UNICRI Initiative on the Nexus between terrorism and organized crime in Africa: Responses to emerging threats and new dynamics

**Monday 13 May, 2.10-3pm
Room M7, M-Building**

Your Excellency Debora LEPRE, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Italy to the United Nations in Vienna,

Mr. Roberto ARBITRIO, Chief, Terrorism Prevention Branch, UNODC

Mr. Djoubèïrou Oumarou DIALLO, Permanent Secretary in charge of implementing the Republic of Mali's National Policy to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism and Terrorism,

Distinguished guests, experts, and participants,

It is with great pleasure as well as with a sense of urgency that I welcome you all to this pivotal joint UNODC-UNICRI side-event focusing on the nexus between

organized crime and terrorism. Today, we gather here to delve deep into one of the most pressing challenges of our time, a challenge that knows no borders, respects no laws, and threatens the very fabric of our societies.

The intersections between organized crime and terrorism represent a threat to global peace, security, and stability. Africa has unfortunately been severely affected by organized criminal networks and terrorist groups exploiting resources, exacerbating conflicts, and perpetrating violence. From the Sahel to the Horn of Africa, from the Lake Chad Basin to the Great Lakes region, the convergence of crime and terrorism poses a significant threat to the peace and development agenda of the continent.

At the heart of the nexus between organized crime and terrorism lies a complex interplay of factors, including porous borders, societal tensions, and historical grievances. Criminal networks exploit these vulnerabilities to traffic drugs, arms, and people, launder illicit proceeds, and engage in other illicit activities. Meanwhile, terrorist groups exploit ungoverned spaces, marginalized communities, and local grievances to recruit fighters, raise funds, and establish footholds from which to launch attacks.

Since 2016, UNICRI has actively supported governmental and non-governmental actors in better assessing and addressing the Nexus. Under the auspices of the GCTF, we developed The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism, a set of non-binding recommendations to be used for international engagement, assistance and training, further operationalised in the Policy Toolkit.

To assist countries in responding to the threat posed by the Nexus, UNODC and UNICRI launched a pilot project in February 2023 on Strengthening Capacities to Address the Nexus between Terrorism and Organized Crime in Africa. The project

aims to assess the nexus between terrorism and organized crime in Africa, raise awareness among criminal justice and law enforcement actors, offer technical and legislative assistance, and enhance cooperation in Africa to effectively address the challenges posed by this nexus.

Following a series of scoping missions with key stakeholders and relevant agencies in Algeria, Benin, Mali and Togo, UNODC and UNICRI designed a detailed and tailored technical assistance plan for each country, according to their specific needs.

We are currently in the process of:

- Conducting research to assess the nature and extent of the Nexus at local, national and regional level.
- Delivering tailored capacity-building initiatives for enhanced prevention and more effective investigations and prosecutions.
- Strengthening inter-agency cooperation at local, national and regional level.

Excellency,

Distinguished participants,

Dear colleagues,

Today, we come together to present the achievements and results of our joint UNODC-UNICRI initiative. However, despite the remarkable efforts that have been put forward in recent years to combat the links between organized crime and terrorism, significant challenges persist, including gaps in coordination, limited resources, and evolving tactics. Enhanced cooperation, strengthened legal frameworks, and strategic investments are essential to effectively address this enduring threat to global security.

In discussing, today, what could be further implemented to confront this challenge, let us be guided by a shared commitment to understanding the root causes, dynamics, and consequences of the nexus between organized crime and terrorism in Africa, including in its different regional manifestations.

Let us recognize that this is not just a security issue but also a development, governance, and human rights issue that requires a comprehensive and integrated response which goes beyond national borders.

In closing, I extend my sincere appreciation to each and every one of you for your dedication, expertise, and partnership in this critical endeavor. Let this event serve as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue, innovative solutions, and strengthened partnerships towards a peaceful and secure Africa, the Africa We Want, as outlined in the Agenda 2063.

Thank you.