



**Remarks Of Leif Villadsen, Acting Director of UNICRI
33nd regular session of CCPCJ
Vienna, 15 May 2024**

Mr. Chairperson, Excellencies, Colleagues,

I am truly delighted to be back in Vienna and have the privilege of addressing you today.

As many of you know, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute – UNICRI - is the only autonomous UN research and training institute with a mandate in crime prevention and criminal justice. For more than 50 years, UNICRI has been generously hosted by Italy in Turin.

Our mandate requires us to report to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), further leading up to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In this session of the CCPCJ, we bring before you our Annual Report for 2023 for your contemplation and submission to the ECOSOC. Your attention to these points is greatly appreciated.

Building upon a strong evidence-based approach, UNICRI has continued to offer an integrative programmatic framework that provides a coherent research-to-practice continuum of analysis, field evidence and data, learning, best practices, programme design and implementation.

As outlined in our Annual Report, there are two interconnected aspects to our work: - on the one hand - our *substantive focus* on new, emerging, and politically sensitive areas of crime prevention, criminal justice and counter-terrorism, and – on the other hand - our *approach*, focused on action-oriented research feeding into our tools, training, and capacity building.

It is the combination of these two aspects that forms the basis for our comparative advantage in the UN system. All our results contribute to the achievement of SDG 16.

This past year, UNICRI has made substantial strides in its mission.

Applying the findings and lessons learned from our action-oriented research, we've expanded our global footprint, delivering specialized technical assistance and training workshops across Africa, the Americas, and Asia through our well-developed in-house capacity to design, deliver, manage and evaluate learning activities, together with our growing network of experts and partnerships.

Covering different topics such as tourism security and vulnerable target protection, nexus between organized crime and terrorism, responsible AI Innovation for law enforcement and combating online child sexual abuse material, combatting trafficking in CBRN materials and international counter-proliferation financing, our specialized training workshops and assistance have strengthened the capabilities of national and international justice, law enforcement and security authorities and forces around the world.

In parallel, in the areas of transnational security and terrorism, we've strengthened global security measures by refining the protection of public spaces and the management of security for major international events. For example, our updated Security Planning Model and the Public-Private Partnership Handbook have equipped Member States with advanced tools to tackle emerging security challenges effectively.

Moreover, in addition to our Master of Laws (LL.M.) in Transnational Crime and Justice, UNICRI also launched the first edition of the – online - Master of Laws in Cybercrime, Cybersecurity and International Law, organized in cooperation with the University for Peace.

We have continued to broaden our practical research focus, prioritizing an evidence- and learning-based approach to crime prevention and criminal justice, a fitting strategy for a research and training institute like ours.

Continuing from and in support of our established programmes, UNICRI has initiated several new research to tackle contemporary global challenges and to inform the development of our technical assistance and training programmes.

This has included studies and research designed to deepen our understanding of the relationship between climate change and violent extremism; to explore how to use advanced technology for rehabilitation of prisoners; to explore the interplay between the trend toward digitalization and the pursuit of peace, justice, and strong institutions; to carry out a Gender Needs Analysis on Preventing Violent Extremism in the Sahel; to analyze CBRN Proliferation Financing focusing on Southeast Asia, and to undertake background research to create a policy framework for the responsible use of facial recognition technology. Just to mention a few.

Moreover, our ongoing research into the responsible use of facial recognition technology has set the stage for developing international guidelines that balance security needs with privacy rights.

The fight against crime and the enhancement of justice systems also saw significant advancements through our efforts to dissect the complex nexus between organized crime and terrorism. Through targeted policy frameworks support and strengthened legal and regulatory environments, we are making tangible progress in combating these intertwined global threats.

As we advance our Strategic Programme Framework for 2023-2026, we look forward to deepening our engagement with Member States and securing the necessary support to meet our objectives. The challenges ahead are significant, but with your continued support, we are well-positioned to promote peace, justice, and inclusive societies under the goals of SDG 16.

I would like to invite Member States to voluntarily support UNICRI in its implementation, as part of their contributions to SDG 16. Since UNICRI is exclusively voluntarily funded, our results are possible with the support of donors and partners. We all share a common vision of a safer world, free from violence and crime, and we look forward to continuing to work together toward this aim.

Thank you.