

# UNODC BACKGROUND GUIDE

AMSIMUN'26

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Dear Delegates,

We are ecstatic to welcome you to the 9th edition of the annual AMSI Model United Nations conferences as the chairs of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)! As there are several prevailing conflicts revolving around drugs, crime, corruption, and terrorism that require a global response to be overcome, we desire your dedication to settling these issues at hand and reaching a satisfactory agreement.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a significant part of the United Nations body, as it contributes to the achievement of security and justice by making the world a safer place for all in terms of crimes and drugs. The UNODC works with governments and other stakeholders to rapidly identify new criminal trends and threats and take strategic and effective action. It also provides the primary forum for multilateral policymaking and information sharing, addressing threats that no one country can tackle alone. All in all, the office organizes several contributions and conferences to work towards this goal, including the 15th Crime Congress that will be held in April of this year in Abu Dhabi

As your chairs, we hope this background guide serves as your starting point for your research and that your resources are not solely based on this document. Keep in mind that this document alone is not adequate for your conference preparation, as you should always conduct personal research on the topic, understand your country's relevance, stance, and relation to the topic to be able to stimulate yourself throughout the course of the conference. This, however, will provide you with an outline, background, and rough idea of the whole topic before you independently dive into the depths of this topic.

On a final note, we look forward to meeting you all this May in committee, as we hope that your participation in this year's conference acts as an exciting learning experience full of passion. If you have any inquiries or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us at any time, and we will be happy to assist you in any way possible.

Your chairs,

Lamar Otabashi & Bassel Boucherabine

## **Topic: Combating Drug-Trafficking Routes Between Latin America, Africa, and Europe**

The sale of drugs in Latin America, Africa, and Europe has become a highly rooted problem, with the help of developed criminal networks taking advantage of political unrest. This black trade is not only a threat to the health of the people but also a threat to national security, as it propagates corruption and destabilizes the entire region. These communities living along these trafficking routes have endured violence, exploitation, and economic loss due to the drug trade that has been growing over time for decades now. International organizations have also been involved in trying to find successful solutions that will lead to the interruption of those paths and the tightening of the collaboration between the nations that are affected by the problem. Even though various countries have adopted stringent laws and increased border control, drug trafficking is still a developing threat that poses a great danger to the security and future of societies across the globe. The conflicts below require a timely and concerted international response aimed at breaking criminal networks and ensuring people are not exposed to the effects of the international drug trade.

### **History**

The shift of drug-trafficking paths between Europe, Latin America, and Africa is strictly related to the global demand, pressure of law enforcement, and geopolitical evolutions. In the mid to late 20th century, Latin America became the main cocaine producer, especially in the Andean region. At first, the routes of trafficking were quite direct, where drugs were carried directly to the consumer markets in North America and Western Europe by air couriers, as well as by sea.

With more international cooperation and interdiction, especially in the Caribbean and direct transatlantic routes, the trafficking organizations started to diversify and split their routes. It is commonly known as the balloon effect because it was the effect that the pressure in one area had on the trafficking activity, which was merely shifted to the other part. Towards the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, West Africa emerged as a region of interest to transit because of its geographic position, lengthy coastline, lack of adequate maritime surveillance, and poor

institutional capacity within a number of states. The networks of criminals took advantage of political instabilities, post-conflict situations, and the lack of resources in law enforcement in some parts of Africa. Other countries like Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria became known as cocaine transporters for shipments between Latin America and Europe. Simultaneously, North Africa turned out to be one of the important routes that connect sub-Saharan transit routes to the markets of Europe via the Mediterranean.

Simultaneously, the Asian and Middle East routes of heroin trafficking persisted in supplying the European markets and, in many cases, overlapped the cocaine routes and led to a further expansion of more closely knit criminal networks. The growth of containerized shipping, the rise of globalization of trade, and the development of communication technologies also allowed traffickers the possibility of hiding the illicit drugs in the legitimate supply chains. With time, these changes made drug trafficking a highly versatile, transnational organization that constantly adapts its pathways in line with the enforcement methods.



## **Analysis**

Currently, the drug-trafficking routes in the Latin American, African, and European regions are more complicated, diversified, and solid than ever. Drug trafficking consolidates its dependence on the Atlantic Ocean to transport its goods using routes and exploiting the sheer volume of global shipping to hide the illegal drugs in commercial containers. Narcotics are also normally transported by fishing boats, personal yachts, and air cargo, becoming even harder to detect.

The transit region of Africa is still the core of this network. Poor border control, poor financial regulations, and corruption in certain states also enable the criminal groups to create former logistics centers and money laundering. In several instances, drug trafficking has become a part of other organized crime as arms trafficking, smuggling of human beings, and financing terrorism. Such a convergence increases the security threats and further destabilizes the already unstable regions. In the countries of the European destinations, drugs contribute to the challenges of public health, addiction rates, and solid criminal networks within these countries. There is also a problem of law enforcement agencies struggling to keep up with the

fast-changing methods of trafficking, especially with the onset of the use of digital technologies, encrypted messages, and complicated money-laundering schemes by criminal groups.

UNODC is important in combating these issues by enhancing intelligence-led policing, judicial co-operation, and capacity-building efforts. Maritime security programs, port control programs and financial crime investigation programs are targeted to break the network of trafficking throughout the supply chain. However, differences in resources, political will, and institutional capability still restrict the efficiency of international responses. An enforcement-based approach has also failed to work. Drug trafficking routes will likely continue to evolve unless the underlying factors of poverty, absence of economic opportunities, and poor governance are tackled. Consequently, UNODC is laying more and more stress on multifaceted approaches combining law enforcement and development aid, civic responses, and multinational collaboration in law enforcement.

The UNODC serves as a central platform for international cooperation against drug trafficking. It supports the implementation of key international conventions, including the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Through technical assistance programs, UNODC helps states improve law enforcement capacity, judicial integrity, and cross-border cooperation. To further combat drug trafficking, the UNODC has issued a worldwide call to action, encouraging governments and partners to take action now to stop criminal networks around the world as we continue expanding long-term financing and support against violence and crimes, opposing the expansion of drug trade, restoring the rights of civilians along these routes and networks, and holding more individuals to join efforts to combat violence, exploitation, and economic loss.

### **Questions to be answered in your resolutions:**

- What can UNODC do to enhance the trilateral collaboration between Latin America, Africa, and Europe to intercept transnational drug-trafficking networks adequately?

- Which mechanisms can be used to enhance intelligence sharing and collaborative investigations without violating national sovereignty and data protection laws?
- What can be done to improve maritime security and ports to identify illegal drugs smuggled in commercial shipping containers?
- What will be the place of technology, e.g., data analytics and surveillance systems, in detecting and disrupting trafficking routes?
- What can be done to help transit countries in Africa establish institutional capacity, curb corruption, and enhance the judiciary?
- What should be done to fight money laundering and illegal financial transactions associated with drug trafficking?
- What can be done to ensure that UNODC does not concentrate on enforcement strategies at the expense of public health, harm reduction, and demand-reduction strategies in destination countries?
- What should the consumer countries do to curb the demand for illicit drugs, and how does the consumer countries' curbing the demand reflect on the international cooperation?

### **Starter Resources**

1. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2025.html>
2. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2024.html>
3. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2023.html>
4. <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Drug-trafficking>
5. <https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/>
6. <https://www.wcoomd.org/>

### **Country Matrix**

Venezuela - United States - Colombia - Mexico - Brazil - Argentina - Russia - Chile - Ecuador - Peru - Yemen - China - United Kingdom - France - Türkiye - Germany - Canada - Afghanistan - India - Pakistan - Iran - Bolivia - Guyana - Paraguay - Suriname - Nigeria - Kenya - South Africa - Uruguay - The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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