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New Trends in International Crime

**UNICRI- UNRIC Briefing
Madariaga – College of Europe Foundation
Brussels, 11 February 2009**

**Sandro Calvani
UNICRI Director**

Excellencies,
I would like to thank everybody for being here this morning.

Globalization and growing economic interdependence have encouraged and promoted the transformation of crime beyond borders in all parts of the world. Improved communications and information technologies, increased blurring of national borders, greater mobility of people, goods and services across countries, and the emergence of a globalized economy have moved crime further away from its domestic base.

In *A more secure world. Our shared responsibility*, the Report of the Secretary –General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004), it is clearly highlighted that we live in world of new and evolving threats, threats that could not have been anticipated when the UN was founded in 1945. Threats like environmental degradation, State collapse, terrorism and transnational organized crime. All of them can undermine States as the basic unit of the international system. Collective security today depends on accepting that the threats which each region of the world perceives as most urgent are in fact equally so for all.

Emerging trends

As the process of globalization has continued, there has been a diversification in the circumstances prevailing in many countries, in the activities and impact of criminal groups and in the structure and approach within and among criminal groups.

In the last decade, organized crime has evolved rapidly, propelled by the opening of new markets, facilitated by new communication technologies and pressured by law enforcement strikes. In a number of countries a **nexus** has emerged **between organized crime, corruption and terrorism**. Since the end of the cold war, countries with **economies in transition have also become particularly** vulnerable to the growth of organized crime. Conflicts and instability in many regions have been intimately associated with the growth of powerful criminal organizations. War not only generates instability, in which organized crime thrives, but provides opportunity for illicit enrichment, through the creation of profitable markets for smuggled goods.

Another significant trend in the last decade is the way in which criminal organizations have **expanded into a wide variety of illicit activities**. Many organized criminal groups have diversified their activities and new groups have emerged in several new and specialized sectors.

Given time constraints, I will briefly mention some sectors, but I am of course open to any question you may have.

Current evidence suggests the increased involvement of organized criminal groups in the area of fraud, most specifically **fraud** using the Internet and related high-technology crimes.

For example counterfeiting and piracy, in all the sectors here highlighted, can give concrete idea of the amount of illegal profit and the extent of the phenomena. **Trafficking** in persons has developed into a multibillion-dollar enterprise. Criminal groups now also engage in **trafficking in firearms, cultural objects and natural resources**.

High potential profits and minimal risk of detection and punishment make illicit traffics a tempting enterprise for organized criminal groups in many countries.

Counterfeiting is another growing and increasingly dangerous phenomenon. The statistics of seizures for 2006 confirm an existing trend.¹

The Report recently produced by my Institute collected data made available by the Taxation and Customs Union of the European Commission to show the increase of seizures of counterfeit goods witnessed by the EU in the recent years: from 68 million goods seized in the year 2000 to more than 128 million goods in 2006. In 2007 the decrease in global seizures of counterfeited items in EU has unfortunately been compensated by a noticeable increase in the seizures of products that are potentially extremely dangerous for consumers' health and safety.

Such an immense expansion of the phenomenon would not be possible without the **involvement of organized criminal structures** devoted to the realization of this activity. The profitability and the strategic value of counterfeiting are so important, that it has been turned into a real **mass scale activity**, whose **production and distribution are well structured and organized**. The seizures of great consignments of replicated goods leave no doubt about the level of organization that is behind this illicit activity. Just to provide you with some numbers on profitability of this type of criminal activity: the value of counterfeited Pharmaceutical drugs - 40 billion; counterfeited Auto parts - 12 billion; counterfeited Technology products - 100 billion; counterfeited Clothing and shoes - 8.24 billion and 920 million respectively; counterfeited cigarettes and cosmetics - 4 billion and 3 billion respectively.²

Environmental crime is a serious and growing international problem, with criminals violating national and international laws put in place to protect the environment. It represents a broad category, which includes five main areas of offences:

- illegal trade in wildlife;
- dumping and illegal trade in hazardous waste;
- illegal trade in ozone-depleting substances;
- illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing;
- illegal logging and trade of timber.

¹In 2006, EU customs seized more than 128 million counterfeit and pirated goods and handled more anti-counterfeiting cases than ever before. In 2005, 200 billion US dollars of international trade could have been in counterfeit or pirated products, while 7-10% of all pharmaceuticals products in the world are believed to be counterfeits, reaching a total of 30-40% in certain African countries Source: OECD, The economic impact of counterfeiting and piracy, 2007.

² Source: HavocScope Black Markets. Available at: <http://www.havocscope.com/products.htm> [last visited on 23.01.2009].

It is also worthy considering the enormous revenues gained by criminal organizations through environmental crimes which are then used to finance other crimes. Just to give you an idea of the enormous annual revenues that stem from this illegal activity: animals and wildlife smuggling - 20 billion; illegal fishing – 16.5 billion; illegal logging – 15 billion; trash smuggling – 11 billion.³

Moreover should be emphasized the dramatic and long lasting impact that this kind of crime could have on a determinate territory and on the community which is living within. Emblematic are the cases of Côte d'Ivoire China and India, in which **illegal toxic waste** dumping is posing a tremendous threat for the health of the community and the ecology of the local environment.

Increasing evidence suggests a growing role of organized crime in the trafficking **of protected species of flora and fauna**. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that the total global trade in animals, plants and their by-products is around \$160 billion per year, based on declared import values, and involves hundreds of millions of plant and animal species.

The **illicit art and antiquities trade** is an age-old problem dating to ancient Greece and before. Plundering is a practice as ancient as warfare itself. With the development of the world's great civilizations, the proverbial "spoils of war" often included national and cultural treasures, including priceless art and antiquities.

However, over the past decades, illicit trafficking in cultural property has, unfortunately, grown into a problem of epidemic proportions.

This is a traffic which concerns all of the world but as usual it is those who can least protect themselves that are the great losers. Quoting the Director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research: "The single largest source of destruction of the archaeological heritage today is through looting – the illicit, unrecorded and unpublished excavation to provide antiquities for commercial profit."

During the past several decades, however, the illegal market in art and antiquities has become transnational in organization. There are a number of major transnational markets in illegal goods, including drugs, weapons, sex slaves, illegal immigrants, precious gems, and automobiles. Art and antiquities are one of these, and a growing one.

As we well know, estimates of the size of illegal markets tend to be extremely unreliable, and the market in illegal antiquities, which often includes both art and antiquities, is no exception.

Looted goods typically are smuggled across borders and change hands many times, the item passes from dealer to dealer often in a series of rapid transactions, resulting in a chain of supply so convoluted it is very difficult for an end-consumer to unravel. Depending on means and ambitions, criminals may undertake sophisticated operations, by which they steal objects, and then directly or indirectly export them to selected countries where they can fetch high prices from willing buyers.

UNICRI is currently planning the development of ad hoc proposals on the issue of fighting organized crime in art and antiquities, with the specific focus of post conflict situations and for this purpose we have already started discussing with other UN organizations dealing with the matter, such as UNESCO and UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

³ Source: HavocScope Black Markets. Available at: <http://www.havocscope.com/products.htm> [last visited on 23.01.2009].

Maritime piracy, even if has been constantly present in criminal history records, is currently becoming an emerging issue due to its wide implications in terms of its social, economical and security impact. It is interesting to note that in 2007 at least 263 pirates attacks have been officially reported, marking thus a clear increment of this kind of criminal activities since 2003. Among many others, it is worth to mention the last pirate attacks against French, Spanish and Italian merchant ships that took place in the Gulf of Aden during April 2008. The positive cost-benefit balance for contemporary pirates is based not only on the overall vulnerability of the target but also on the scarce awareness and lack of proper reporting by the International Community concerning this criminal phenomenon.

According to the most up-to-dated analysis, major characteristics common to almost all “successful” pirate attacks are based mainly on surprise, speed and violence. Therefore efficient and effective countering strategies may be designed in order to provide detection, deterrence and/or active response to pirate attacks. All this considered, various counter strategies could be developed by the International Community, such as:

- Improving international legislation concerning boarding ships procedures and permissions
- Agreement among countries hosting pirates “safe heavens” (e.g. INDONESIA – NIGERIA – SOMALIA – PHILIPPINES)
- Creation of a permanent task force / rapid deployment team among different law enforcement agencies
- Sponsor/develop Crew Security Awareness and Detection Trainings
- Development and distribution of Anti-Piracy Tracking Devices

The worldwide multiplication of new information and communication technologies also casts a dark shadow: it has made possible new forms of exploitation, new opportunities for criminal activity and indeed new forms of crime.

Maritime piracy is, in our opinion, a perfect example of a contemporary crime problem on the rise that requires joint cooperation of the actors of the international community, to promote the exchange of information and best practices and identify stakeholders, tactics, and criminal routes

Obstacles at international level

The main obstacles that the international community is facing nowadays can be summarized as following:

- Insufficient cooperation among States
- Weak coordination among international organizations
- Inadequate commitment from many Countries

Despite the above mentioned fast and ever-changing forms of crime emerging in our societies and the spread of the results that every day we citizens have to suffer, I still see a lack of sense of urgency to the response to organized crime thus making our efforts sometimes weak and ineffective.

On the contrary, the best forces like public opinion, civil societies, political institutions and economic power have effectively joined their will and their capacity where a sense of clear and present danger was perceived. There is no worse vulnerability than that of a person, of an enterprise, of a trade union, of a government unaware of the real impact of crime.

Therefore the keyword is **cooperation** among all the actors involved in fighting against crime.

UNICRI response

Among the sectors those that can be identified as new areas of action for organized crime groups, I would like to highlight that UNICRI commitment is developing effective programmes. In a rapidly changing world, UNICRI's major goals today are advancing security, serving justice and building peace. UNICRI sees itself as 'the first response broker'. It has become known for its dynamic, fresh and innovative approach in applied research.

I would like to use a sentence from Dag Hammarskjold, Un Secretary-General, to close my speech and I wish you can feel in these words UNICRI never ending faith and commitment into justice.

Thank you for your kind attention.