

UNODC

BACKGROUND GUIDE



COUNCIL INFORMATION

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a specialized office of the United Nations that addresses global issues related to drugs, crime, corruption, and terrorism. Established in 1997 and headquartered in Vienna, Austria, UNODC works with governments and international partners to promote justice, security, and the rule of law.

UNODC operates under the authority of the United Nations and carries out its mandate through internationally recognized legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and international drug control conventions.

The primary areas of focus for UNODC include:

- Combating illicit drug production, trafficking, and abuse
- Preventing organized and transnational crime
- Addressing corruption and promoting transparency
- Counteracting terrorism and strengthening security
- Supporting criminal justice systems and the rule of law

Through research, policy guidance, and capacity-building programs, UNODC assists member states in developing effective and sustainable responses to crime-related challenges.

ISSUE 1: REFORMING SENTENCING STANDARDS FOR OFFENCES COMMITTED UNDER IMPAIRED MENTAL STATES

Criminal justice systems face challenges when dealing with offences committed under impaired mental states resulting from mental illness, psychological disorders, trauma, or substance abuse. These situations raise complex questions regarding criminal responsibility, accountability, and appropriate sentencing.

Sentencing standards vary significantly across countries, often leading to inconsistent outcomes and unequal treatment of offenders. While some legal systems emphasize punishment, others focus on rehabilitation and treatment, creating gaps in fairness and effectiveness.

Reforming sentencing standards requires balancing public safety, human rights, and rehabilitation. This includes the use of mental health assessments, standardized sentencing guidelines, access to treatment programs, and alternatives to incarceration where appropriate.

GUIDING QUESTIONS – ISSUE 1

- How should criminal responsibility be determined under impaired mental states?
- What balance should exist between punishment and rehabilitation?
- How can sentencing standards be made fair and consistent?
- What role should mental health evaluations play in sentencing?
- How can rehabilitation reduce repeat offences?



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ISSUE 2: POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND ITS ROLE IN ENABLING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME

Political corruption weakens governance systems and enables transnational organised crime to operate across borders. Practices such as bribery, abuse of power, and obstruction of justice allow criminal networks to evade law enforcement and expand illegal activities.

Organised crime groups rely on corrupt officials to facilitate drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, and arms smuggling. This relationship threatens national security, undermines the rule of law, and erodes public trust.

Addressing this issue requires strong anti-corruption frameworks, transparent institutions, and international cooperation. Measures focusing on accountability, prevention, and cross-border collaboration are essential to dismantle organised criminal networks.

GUIDING QUESTIONS – ISSUE 2

- How does political corruption enable organised crime?
- What governance weaknesses allow corruption to persist?
- How can international cooperation be strengthened?
- What measures protect whistleblowers and investigators?
- How can transparency reduce organised crime influence?



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