



TANA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SECURITY IN AFRICA

Summary Note

Security and Transnational Organized Crime

It is widely recognized that Africa faces threats to governance and security from the increasing operations of transnational organized criminal networks. This briefing note seeks, first, to identify the dimensions of the problem; second, to indicate their significance at this time; and third, to define some key questions for discussion at the Forum, in order to enable participants to identify African- led approaches to these issues.

Transnational Organized Crime: The Nature of the Problem Transnational organized criminal activities are a threat to African governance and security. They include:

- Production, trafficking and sale of illegal narcotic drugs;
- The smuggling of unlawful mi- grants into Europe;
- People trafficking, including abduction, enslavement and organ trafficking;
- “Conflict minerals” such as diamonds, gold and coltan extracted and sold illegally by insurgents;
- Maritime piracy;
- Unlawful trade in weapons;
- Trade in counterfeit products such as cigarettes;
- Money-laundering and financial extortion and deception.

These activities fuel corruption and in some cases contribute to violence. How- ever, we should be aware that there is no automatic link between organized crime and political violence. While the profits from drug production have funded insurgencies in countries such as Colombia and Afghanistan, international drugs traders do not, in general, support rebel groups – they prefer to bribe government officials.

These activities stem from deeper structural political and economic problems. For example, the drugs trade exists because there is demand for these products in rich countries; people smuggling arises because of economic inequalities between rich and poor countries; piracy in the Indian



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Ocean derives from the impoverishment of Somali fishing communities and the lack of government institutions in that country; and the mining and sale of artisanal minerals by rebels in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is a symptom of the unresolved conflict in that country, not the cause of it.

International policy responses, such as the U.S.-led “war on drugs”, also pose problems for Africa. For example, the experience of Mexico indicates that a militarized crackdown on drug cartels can fuel armed turf battles between lower-level drug smugglers, and violence between them and the law enforcement. Harsh measures against the brokers who organize unlicensed migration into Europe and push these people into the more harmful practices of people trafficking, including ransoming and organ trafficking. Many Congolese assert that the U.S. Dodd–Frank Act of July 2010 (Section 1502), which imposes a strict certification regime on international companies dealing in artisanal minerals from Congo and neighbouring countries, has deepened Congo’s crisis and not helped resolve it.

Why the Issue is Significant Today The crisis in Mali and the Sahara, the allegation that Guinea Bissau is becoming a “narco-state”, the scandal of people trafficking in north-east Africa, piracy in the Indian Ocean, and the “conflict minerals” campaign in the U.S. have all focused attention on transnational organized crime.

Africa needs to respond to this serious and growing problem. Africa also needs to assess whether the standard policy responses prescribed by Europe and the U.S. – as outlined above – are in the continent’s interests or not. There are good reasons to worry that Africa has as much to fear from the “war on drugs” as from drugs themselves or from the “conflict minerals” campaign as from these minerals themselves.

Critical Issues for Discussion

- What are the rootcauses of transnational criminal activities in Africa?
- How should Africa respond to issues of global economic inequality and the demand for drugs, counterfeit goods, cheap labour, and human organs in richer countries?
- How can African states strengthen their governance so as to minimize corruption arising from organized crime?
- Which current policies and practices against organized crime are working, and which are not?



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- Which governments and inter-national institutions are promoting policies based exclusively on prohibition, interdiction and policing, and why?
- What alternative policies – such as the legalization and regulation of the drugs trade, or voluntary codes of conduct for transparency in minerals extraction – are being advocated, by whom, and to what effect?
 - What damage mitigation efforts – interdiction and law enforcement – are essential?
- What activities are criminal under any definition and should be the priorities for Africa's law enforcement efforts?
- What European and American policies in this field are detrimental to Africa's interests?
 - How can African nations develop and implement policies that serve the continent's core interests?