

CONCEPT NOTE

Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the Global Strategy on Waste Trafficking

28 November 2023, 09:00 – 12:00 CET time

Online

Rationale

Different types of waste, including plastics and their unsound management, are globally recognized as a major source of pollution. In an effort to circumvent rules in place for the trade in and management of waste, illegal trade in waste (or waste trafficking) is threatening the environment and human health, and is considered a type of crime that affects the environment. Once it reaches destination countries, waste often ends up in illegal landfills or illegal storage sites, or is burnt in the open, causing harm to both the environment and human health, while undermining the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and stunting the transition towards a circular economy.

With an estimated value of 12.5-18.8 billion USD per year, organized crime groups have much to gain from this low-risk high-reward illegal trade. The boundaries between the legal and illegal activities related to waste can be thin, and the activities, actors and modus operandi involved often overlap and fuel each other.

Alarmed by existing research indicating that crimes that affect the environment have become some of the most lucrative transnational criminal activities, State parties to the United National Economic and Social Council and United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) adopted a series of resolutions to address crimes that affect the environment, amongst which [resolution 2021/24](#) on “*Preventing and combating crimes that affect the environment*”, [resolution 10/6](#) on “*Preventing and combating crimes that affect the environment falling within the UNTOC*” and [resolution 11/3](#) on “*Outcomes of the joint thematic discussion of the Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance and the Working Group on International Cooperation on the application of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime for preventing and combating transnational organised crimes that affect the environment*”.

Building upon the aforementioned objectives, UNODC has been implementing a regional project in Southeast Asia (*Unwaste*) to better map the flows of waste, identify the modus operandi of waste trafficking networks, and strengthen national, regional and inter-regional cooperation to tackle these crimes. Further, UNODC has developed a legislative guide to support States in drafting or strengthening national legislation to prevent and curb this illicit activity. UNODC also has global programmes that target waste trafficking in the containerized supply chain and support law enforcement and criminal justice personnel both on land and at sea to develop capacity to address these crimes.

Objectives

With this strategy, UNODC aims to maximize its impact by targeting specific elements related to the prevention and combatting of waste trafficking, its consequences (such as pollution), and related and enabling crimes (e.g.: corruption, etc). This approach operates in synergy with partner organizations, governments, and other initiatives, enhancing the effectiveness of the efforts against waste-related crimes and their consequences.

Given the many actors involved in the global waste sector, including other UN entities, government agencies, civil society and the private sector, and the increasing number of international agreements such as the legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, the global conversations on waste and pollution, UNODC is taking steps towards developing its own global strategy on addressing waste

trafficking and its impacts, that will support the alignment and optimal coordination between its various in-house programmes as well as with external actors operating in this space.

The primary objective of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is to discuss and provide inputs to the draft Global Strategy on Waste Trafficking.

The draft Global Strategy will provide a brief context of the challenges with Waste Trafficking and UNODC's role to design and implement a proper response, jointly with other stakeholders. It will describe possible funding options, aims, output, cross-cutting issues and recommendations.

Methodology and expected outcomes

The EGM will take place online on 28 November 2023, from 09:00 – 12:00 CET time.

The meeting will shortly introduce the background to the Global Strategy and present and discuss its main elements. Participants are also encouraged to suggest avenues for collaboration in the fight against Waste Trafficking and help identify synergies.

Before the meeting commences, a preliminary draft of the document will be distributed. During the EGM, it is anticipated that discussions will ensue to enhance and validate the draft Global Strategy, with the aim of concluding the revisions by December 2023. Following this, the revised Strategy will be circulated to participants in December 2023 to solicit their final input. It is envisioned that the Strategy will be finalized in January 2024.

Programme Context and Focal Points

The development of the Strategy is funded by UNODC. The overall coordination is ensured by the UNODC Global Programme against Crimes that Affect the Environment (GPCAE) in cooperation with the UNODC ROSEAP *Unwaste* project. All relevant UNODC programmes that have ongoing work and a mandate in this area are consulted. For more details, please contact the following focal points:

- GPCAE focal point: Lejda Toci, Programme Officer, lejda.toci@un.org
- Unwaste focal point: Ioana Cotutiu, Project Coordinator, ioana.cotutiu@un.org

Partnership

UNODC will closely collaborate with International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) including Minamata Convention Secretariat and Montreal Protocol Ozone Secretariat, the World Customs Organisation (WCO), the secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (BRS Secretariat), and other international and regional organisations.

Meeting participants

The Expert Group Meeting will be composed of leading experts in the fields of pollution crime from around the world, including regulators, practitioners, government experts and experts from the relevant regional and international organisations, researchers and academics. Participation at the EGM is on a voluntary basis, with the exception of consultants engaged by UNODC for the purpose of the development of the Strategy and facilitation of the EGM.

EGM Agenda
 28 November 2023 – Online
 09:00 – 12:00 CET Time

CET Time	Topic	Presenter
09:00 – 09:10	Opening	UNODC
09:10 – 09:40	Roundtable presentation of participants and stocktaking	All
09:40 – 09:50	Presentation of the draft Global Strategy	UNODC
09:50 – 10:30	Topic 1: Gaps and Challenges concerning Waste Trafficking & possible solutions to address them	Discussion in breakout groups
10:30 – 10:40	Feedback from the breakout groups	
10:40 – 10:50	Break	
10:50 – 11:30	Topic 2: Aims and Output of the Strategy. Topics to be considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building long term strategic partnerships. • Research and data analysis to understand the implementation challenges and threats. • Capacity building and tools. • Strengthening the enforcement chain. • Design of Joint Operations. • Facilitating the regulatory feedback loop. 	Discussions in breakout groups
11:30 – 11:45	Feedback from breakout groups	
11:45 – 12:10	Topic 3: Delivery and partnerships	Discussion
12:10 – 12:15	Next steps and closing	UNODC