



**Briefing by the Director of the United Nations Interregional
Crime and Justice Research Institute**

**Management Segment of the
United Nations Economic and Social Council**

Item 19: Social and Human Rights Questions

c) Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

22 July 2021 (10:00-13:00 ET)

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to join you here today to deliver this briefing on the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).

I would like to express my appreciation to the previous speaker, H.E. Ambassador Alessandro Cortese, Permanent Representative of Italy to the International Organizations in Vienna and Chair of the 30th Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), for his invaluable support. I would equally like to convey my gratitude to H.E. Ambassador Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations and Vice President of ECOSOC, for advocating for our request here in New York.

UNICRI is one of the six research and training institutes of the United Nations. UNICRI was established in 1968 pursuant to ECOSOC resolution 1086 B (XXXIX), which urged an expansion of UN activities in criminal justice and crime prevention. UNICRI's statute was adopted by ECOSOC through Resolution 1989/56, and ECOSOC endorses the appointment of members to UNICRI's Board of Trustees – our governing body.

Notwithstanding these long ties between UNICRI and ECOSOC, this is the first time a UNICRI Director has formally briefed the membership of ECOSOC, and I appreciate this opportunity. Through this briefing, UNICRI hopes to increase its visibility with ECOSOC and to share with Member States some of its extensive experience in the field of criminal justice and crime prevention. UNICRI has much to contribute to Member States, particularly in light of this year's in-depth review of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

Please allow me to clarify from the outset that our aim is not to alter or modify our existing reporting lines to ECOSOC through the CCPCJ on substantive matters. Rather, we seek to complement them, by affording UNICRI the same opportunity that each of the other five research and training institutes of the United Nations has to engage directly and on a recurring basis with their parent organ – be it

ECOSOC or the General Assembly. UNICRI is the only UN research and training institute not regularly afforded this opportunity, until now.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to now introduce highlights from UNICRI's 2020 annual report.

Throughout the pandemic, UNICRI continued to develop, test and promote innovative measures in the field of criminal justice and crime prevention to build the knowledge and capacity of Member States. We undertook research of key problems and tailored interventions, launching nine specialized public reports. We organized an unprecedented number of virtual capacity-building and knowledge-development activities, with participation that far exceeded previous years. For example, our annual global meeting on artificial intelligence (AI) for law enforcement registered 600 participants, which was a 10-fold increase. All of UNICRI's work furthered SDG 16 to prevent and counter crime, strengthen the rule of law, and build resilient societies.

UNICRI addressed emerging activities of terrorist, violent extremist, and organized criminal groups seeking to capitalize on the destabilizing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As documented in a UNICRI report, violent non-state actors significantly increased their use of social media during the pandemic to reinforce extremist narratives and recruitment strategies. For anyone using or concerned about social media, this is an eye-opening report.

To prevent and counter the rise of violent extremism, UNICRI worked with local communities and civil society to strengthen capacities to build resilience, with particular attention on youth and vulnerable groups. In the Sahel-Maghreb region, UNICRI analyzed data on the type of local strategies and measures that effectively strengthen community resilience to violent extremism. We identified lessons learned that are relevant to Member States when developing local and national policies to counter violent extremism, such as that a decrease in women's participation in public life is an early warning of increased risk of violent extremism.

UNICRI also raised global awareness on how sport can be used to promote peace, justice, and inclusion, as well as a sense of belonging and resilience to violent extremism.

Since the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism continues to undermine peace and stability, UNICRI expanded its capacity-building to reinforce border security and build resilience, carrying out training courses in Albania and Kenya.

UNICRI worked closely with Member States in the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and North Africa to identify country-specific policies to recover illicit assets linked to organized crime and corruption and to create mechanisms to distribute recovered assets to development priorities, such as healthcare and education.

We also analyzed how advances in science and technology, in particular AI, can strengthen criminal justice systems. Through our Centre for Artificial Intelligence in the Netherlands, UNICRI explores the potential for malicious uses of AI, as well as how AI can responsibly be used to combat terrorism online and the rise of child sexual abuse material.

In 2020, UNICRI also proudly celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Centres of Excellence initiative, which brings together 62 Member States to mitigate risks related to these CBRN materials. In the Middle East, Black Sea, and Southeast Asia, UNICRI trained law enforcement to plan and carry out operations to combat radiological and nuclear trafficking, which is critical to preventing weapons of mass destruction terrorism.

2020 was undoubtedly a crisis year around the globe, exposing and exacerbating deep-seated challenges. Notwithstanding this, I am pleased to report that it was a positive year overall for UNICRI; we reinforced existing areas of work and expanded into new and emerging areas of criminal justice and crime prevention.

As an exclusively voluntarily funded entity, all our results are made possible by the support of our host country, donors, and partners, to whom we are deeply grateful. Together we share a common vision of a safer world, free from violence and crime.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to conclude by reiterating my appreciation for today's opportunity to build our relationship with you, the Member States of ECOSOC – our parent organ – and to highlight UNICRI's important work in criminal justice and crime prevention. We are grateful to speak directly and formally with you today and would welcome the chance do so again on a recurring basis – ideally in the same manner as our sister research and training institutes.

Thank you.