

# GWJ United Nation Representative Advocacy Report Vienna 2020

## GWJ advocacy goals

1. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to policy, legislation, budget and infrastructure to facilitate transition of girls from primary to secondary school and ensure gender parity and gender equality throughout secondary education by 2030.
2. By 2030 100% of United Nations low income Member States have increased access to tertiary education for girls and women by 50%.
3. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to and implement policies for continuing education to empower women throughout the life course, within the formal and informal economies.
4. Influence the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.
5. All 17 SDGs will include girls' education targets.



## GWJ Co-sponsored Side Event: 'Linking Criminal Justice and the SDGs in a New Way: Corruption creates wicked legacies at hazardous sites'



*Invitation to the Side Event, showing GWJ as a co-sponsor.*

10th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the  
**United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC),  
12-16 October 2020, Vienna**

## Virtual Side Event - 10.00 am, 15/10/2020

### Subject of meeting:

The side event consisted of opening remarks by Ilona Graenitz, the chair of the UN Vienna NGO Committee on Sustainable Development: a presentation by Professor Verena Winiwarter, of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna: and a Q&A / discussion.

Ilona Graenitz talked of the importance of the rule of law as a key building block to sustainable development – and of how corruption, undermining the rule of law, jeopardises progress towards the SDG's, and provides opportunity to Transnational Organized Crime ('TOC'). This is particularly important in the area of environmental crime, where the management of toxic legacy sites and increasing amounts of hazardous waste provide much scope for corruption and organized crime. The purpose of the side event was to encourage UN member states to look more deeply into the legacy of hazardous waste, to give a higher priority to managing the many issues that it brings, and to develop more effective regulatory and legal frameworks.

In her excellent presentation and answers to questions, Professor Winiwarter made the following points:

- Legacy toxic waste sites and the long-term management of hazardous waste are not currently getting the systematic attention that they need. The resulting corruption and crime are jeopardising SDGs 6, 8, 12, 14 and 15.
- With amounts of toxic chemicals / hazardous waste much increasing, risks will further increase in the future. There must be more effective mechanisms for accountability - so that countries, organisations and individuals can all be held accountable.
- Crime in hazardous waste management is a large and growing business opportunity, currently estimated to be worth \$10-12 billion p.a. It is a driver of corruption, organized crime Mafias, conflicts. It compromises our environment and, through damage to water, soil and air, to human health.
- There are many examples of this type of crime – huge amounts of plastic waste are dumped illegally in the oceans; most of our 42 million tonnes of electronic waste is not disposed of legally....
- Many industries are impacted - chemicals, oil, lead, mining, timber, textiles, dyeworks... There are problems in industrial complexes, factories, quarries, mines.
- There is an important need for better regulation, more expert inspection. For instance in Europe, there are over 10,000 known toxic legacy sites. There will be a many more unknown ones.

- The combination of longevity, toxicity, synergies with natural hazards (e.g. the impact of hurricanes / a tsunami), issues of national security (e.g. nuclear weapons disposal), secrecy and legal ineffectiveness provide a dangerous mix - the problem will get worse.
- There is much existing regulation - but it is often unclear, lax and not properly implemented. Loopholes provide major opportunities for organized crime. We need effective measures to improve the traceability of waste and to provide law-enforcement authorities with adequate training and resources to better perform their inspection activities.
- There are significant economic and financial incentives to waste management crime. It is much cheaper to dump (e.g. into the oceans) rather than dispose properly - and then to charge as if disposal was proper. Remediators of legacy sites have repeatedly falsified cleanup data - and then claim for full remediation. These incentives to deal with waste illegally must be identified and eliminated.
- This is an international problem and must be dealt with internationally. There is a great need for international focus and management. Waste trafficking must be dealt with as a serious crime (just as drugs trafficking, human trafficking etc).
- There is also a need for much better education. Younger people must be informed about these issues - which will so impact future generations. There is a great and appropriate focus currently on climate change, but it is important also to understand the connection between climate change and environmental crime - for instance hurricanes can be responsible for the significant and dangerous dispersal of toxins.

Characteristics	Arrangements with short-lived legacies	Arrangements with stable, long-lived legacies	Arrangements with transformative legacies
Type of Legacy			
Longevity of Legacy	Water mills;	Irrigation works;	Nuclear power plants;
Maintenance requirements	Windmills;	Motorways;	Deep Mines;
Energy expenditure centered on	Unpaved paths;	Terraforming agricultural practices;	Industries using or producing toxic compounds (e.g. Hg);
Energy harvest density	Rainfed agriculture;	Run-of-the-river hydropower plants;	Exploitative fisheries leading to species extinction;
Transformative Potential (impact on practices)	Forestry with natural regrowth;	Forestry with seeding;	

Examples for wicked legacies
Contaminated Soils (POPs, Heavy Metals)
Degraded and eroded soils
Mining legacies: Land Subsidence and Groundwater threats
Greenhouse Gases
Nuclear Weapons and the facilities used for them
Nuclear Wastes throughout the fuel cycle
Overfished, acidic Seas – altered marine ecosystems
Engineered Rivers (levee effect)

Screenshots as Professor Verena Winiwarter delivers her presentation

**Refers to SDG no #: (please reference)**

6, 8, 12, 14 and 15

**Relevant treaties/conventions/resolutions:**

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

### **Intervention by GWI rep: (what you did)**

We were pleased to co-sponsor the side event, which attracted significant interest.

### **Personal observations :**

The side event provided a valuable platform to highlight to UNTOC attendees issues of great importance. Waste Management crime can have a significant impact on health, particularly women's health - and, enabled and exacerbated by corruption, has a dangerous impact on various SDGs, particularly 6, 14, and 15 .

The need for education on this issue was an important emphasis.

### **How this serves GWI members:**

Environmental crime with its damage to water, earth and air, and its encouragement to corruption is a key issue for us all and can have a particularly unfortunate impact on women.

### **Next steps:(what needs to be done, who can we contact? Who did you network with?)**

Participants were encouraged by Resolution 9 tabled by France to the UNTOC meeting, which looks to position environmental crime as a serious global crime issue, requiring greater resources and much improved international cooperation. The resolution recognizes that crimes that affect the environment may also have a negative impact on economies, public health, human safety, food security, livelihoods and habitats and are drivers for climate change - and requires recommendations for actions to be developed for the next UNTOC Session. We will be following up in the context of the Vienna NGO Committee on Sustainable Development.

[https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/COP/SESSION\\_10/Website/CTOC COP\\_2020 L.9/CTOC COP\\_2020 L.9 E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/COP/SESSION_10/Website/CTOC_COP_2020_L.9/CTOC_COP_2020_L.9_E.pdf)