

Advocacy Report UN Vienna 2024



COP 12 – UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) 12th Session Vienna, 14-18/10/2024

Subject of meeting:

The 12th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) was held in Vienna 14-18/10/2024.

Parties to the UNTOC – the world’s only global, legally binding instrument through which governments commit to act and cooperate against organized crime – meet every two years at the COP to improve their capacity to combat organized crime, and to review the implementation of UNTOC and its Protocols. The UNTOC is supplemented by three Protocols: a) to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially women and children; b) against the Smuggling of Migrants, and c) against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in Firearms. At COP 12, a record 1,400 participants from 131 States, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 212 NGOs attended. More than 60 side events were held. I represented GWI.

102 statements by member states about progress and obstacles in tackling transnational crimes were delivered. 12 by NGOs.



L: COP 12 the opening plenary session; M: UNTOC Chair Ambassador Burian, Slovakia; R: NGO Briefing

GWI was pleased to co-sponsor a side event on ***'Making sure that firearms do not end up being used in gender-based violence'***, principally sponsored by Zonta International.

Four **resolutions** were adopted covering topics including: the criminalization of crimes that affect the environment; preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms in light of technological developments; the implementation of the provisions on international cooperation of UNTOC; review mechanisms on the implementation of UNTOC.

The resolution on crimes that affect the environment is somewhat disappointing. The draft resolution tabled by France, Brazil and Peru had been very promising - with indigenous people, vulnerable groups, women and children being covered separately – but this was condensed after intense negotiation. However, the fact that a resolution was ultimately passed was a source of much celebration, with some of the key players in tears of joy.



A high-level event, attended by the Ministers of Justice of Angola and Italy and the Attorney General of Uganda along with the UNODC Executive Director, was held on the opening day to kick off observance of the first **International Day against Organized Crime on November 15**, the anniversary of the Palermo Convention – the adoption of UNTOC in 2000. Its theme is “Organized crime steals, corrupts and kills. It’s time we pull together to push back”.

Civil Society was invited to several briefings organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The UNODC Executive Director, Ghada Whaly, as well as the Chair of the Conference, stressed the importance of Civil Society involvement in the review and implementation processes of the Convention and its protocols.



Refers to SDG no #: (please reference)

All, with particular reference to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17

Relevant treaties/conventions/resolutions:

Many, including the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols; the Kyoto Declaration; the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC); the international instruments to prevent and combat terrorism, etc.

Intervention by GWI rep: (what you did) Please see the appendix on the side event that GWI co-sponsored. GWI also participated in the

Informal Dialogues with the UNODC Executive Director, the UNTOC Chair, other conference-related events and many of the side events.



L: a side-event R: a side-event presentation; Above left, previous page: Elisabeth with Brazilian delegates, including a representative from the Indigenous peoples of Amazonas;

Personal observations:

Organized Crime impacts women in so many ways. Human trafficking (often young women for sex), people smuggling, drugs and firearms trafficking, corruption, environmental crime, - all are areas where much is being done but where organized crime is quicker, more adaptable and much more effective than UN member states.

UNTOC has so far not lived up to the ideals with which it was launched in 2000. Deterioration in international co-operation and multilateralism have impacted momentum and effectiveness. Delays in the country reviews are attributed to many reasons among them inertia and vested interests (see GI-TOC below). However, UNTOC, and the review processes that it governs, is the only global, legally binding instrument through which governments commit to act and cooperate against organized crime. As such, the way that UNTOC develops and is implemented is of great importance to women globally.

Elisabeth Francis
GWI UN Representative, Vienna

Links to relevant documents / reports

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/v24/054/67/pdf/v2405467.pdf>

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/v24/052/70/pdf/v2405270.pdf>

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/ltd/v24/072/89/pdf/v2407289.pdf>

[https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Is-the-UNTOC-working -An-assessment-of-the-implementation-and-impact-of-the-Palermo-Convention-GI-TOC-October-2024-1.pdf](https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Is-the-UNTOC-working-An-assessment-of-the-implementation-and-impact-of-the-Palermo-Convention-GI-TOC-October-2024-1.pdf)



L: Panel on Environmental Crime; M: Crime Alliance panel; R: Elisabeth Francis with Christine Peer, SI, at COP 12

Appendix – Side Event Report

'Making sure that firearms do not end up being used in gender-based violence'

Principal sponsor – Zonta International. Co-sponsors: COSTA RICA, Every Woman Treaty, International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), KENNIS: Knowledge for Safety and Good Governance, **Graduate Women International (GWI)**, Soroptimist International, Vienna NGO Committee on CSW, NGO Committee on CSD, The Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Speakers: H.E. Mrs. Verónica García Gutiérrez, Minister Counsellor and Consul General, Permanent Mission of Costa Rica; Ana Paula De Carvalho Oliveira, Independent Expert; Callum Watson, Small Arms Survey; Patricia Elias, Every Woman Treaty; Simonetta Grassi, UNODC; Anna Alvazzi del Frate, Kennis, Knowledge for Safety and Good Governance. Moderator: Ingeborg Geyer, Zonta International



The panel at the successful GWI co-sponsored side event



The panellists discussed the links and potential synergies between relevant international treaties (Firearms Protocol, CEDAW) and highlighted the gaps that exist with respect to preventing the risk of firearms being used for gender-based violence and violence against women.

Conclusions and recommendations included the need to:

- mainstream gender in the prevention of misuse of firearms and armed violence
- learn to use gender-sensitive language that explains the impact for all – men and boys, women and girls
- connect diplomatic initiatives to align regulations on firearms with respect to the risk of GBV and VAW
- promote the New Optional Protocol to CEDAW, as currently 75% of women are left without a legally binding instrument to protect them from discrimination and GBV.

Full and effective implementation of international instruments requires better connections and the creation of spaces for the exchange of experience and knowledge, to reduce the gendered impacts of misuse of firearms.

The side event took place in one of the large UN Conference rooms, recognising the importance of the subject. It was well attended, and feedback was excellent. It was highly informative with many recommendations for attendees to consider and follow up on. More details can be provided on request.

Elisabeth Francis