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GRAZ - INNSBRUCK - KLAGENFURT - LINZ - SALZBURG - VIENNA

Abstract

Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)

**"Combating Organized Crime Networks:
Drug Trafficking and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons"**

Both the phenomenon of drug trafficking as well as that of trafficking of small arms cause further destabilisation in regions already sensitive from conflict. In combination, they have a devastating effect because profits from one type of illicit production or trade are used to acquire other illegal or illicitly marketed products. Therefore the connection between the trafficking in drugs and the trafficking in small arms is a serious threat to national, regional and international security, making it necessary to deal with this issue in the CCPCJ.

Drug Trafficking

The production and trade in narcotics is one of the world's largest and most lucrative industries. The market for these substances is located mainly in the economically developed countries. However, drug dependence in the economically less developed countries is increasing since the option of growing alternative crops is limited for geographical and but mainly economic reasons.

The marketing of drugs conforms to the laws of supply and demand: as demand in the economically developed countries increases, production in the economically less developed countries expands. Due to a high rate of drug consumption in the economically developed countries these countries have been burdened with many of the negative side effects of the demand side of this phenomenon, including an increase in crime and pressure on health and welfare resources.

Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The term "small arms and light weapons" is defined as weapons that can be carried by a single person. The term is sometimes shortened to "SALW" or "small arms". It covers a wide range of weapons: pistols, machine guns, other firearms, grenades, portable anti-tank systems, and mortars. For further information, please refer to the UN's Report of the Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms.

Small arms kill thousands of people around the world each year. This is more than the casualty count from conventional weapons like tanks, bomber jets or warships. Small arms are devastating communities around the world. They are very durable and this is why the same guns are sometimes used over and over again in different conflict areas. Small arms are sometimes used to force families and entire villages to flee their homes. Another negative effect of the proliferation of small arms is that it discourages foreign investment and reduces the prospects of economic development.

The Threat of Drug Trafficking in Combination with the Trafficking of Small Arms

Criminal organizations, small smuggling operations that are based in a community as well as large, well-organised groups, are often involved in both the illicit trading of weapons and the trading of illegal drugs. Sometimes drugs are exchanged for weapons or vice versa. Criminal organisations can be dealers in both commodities in order to diversify their trade. In some instances these criminal groups also control the production of the products.