United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime

BACKGROUND GUIDE

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

DPSIMUN ’26

CONFERENCE THEME

“Radical Resilience: Engineering Stability in an Age of Volatility”

DAIS

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COMMITTEE

UNODC

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1.1 Welcome Message

Welcome to DPSIMUN ’26 and to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Model UN is a great place for young people to come together, learn how global politics actually works, and get some practice solving real world problems. As delegates, you are stepping into the shoes of leaders who have to think on their feet, really listen to other points of view, and work as a team to take on major global issues. Over the next few days, we want you to dig deeper into these problems, bring good ideas to the table, and help build solutions that could genuinely work.

This year’s conference theme, *Radical Resilience: Engineering Stability in an Age of Volatility*, asks us to think about how countries can hold steady through sudden crises and fast moving change. In this committee, that is not about who gives the flashiest speech or wins the most arguments. It is about working together to fix broken systems, outthink criminal networks, and leave the world a little safer than we found it. Come to every session ready to learn, speak up, and treat your fellow delegates with respect. We are glad you are here, and we hope you have a great conference.

1.2 Chair Messages

Michael N. Boafo CHAIR, UNODC

Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to UNODC at DPSIMUN ’26!

My name is Michael, and I will be serving as your Chair. This is my fourth MUN overall, but my very first time sitting on this side of the desk. After three conferences as a delegate where I managed to win two awards, I have finally traded the stress of drafting long working papers for a gavel.

The UNODC sits right at the front lines of tackling organized crime, cyberthreats, and illicit networks. Our job in this committee is to bring sharp, practical solutions to issues that international law often struggles to keep up with.

My main expectation is that you show up ready to actually debate rather than just read off a screen. Focus on substance, challenge weak arguments respectfully, and do not be afraid to take risks. If you trip up on a speech or mess up procedure, laugh it off and keep moving.

Do your research, know your country policy inside out, and let us make this committee one to remember.

See you in session!

Amin Ahmed Yordah CHAIR, UNODC

Distinguished delegates, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Organized Crime. My name is Amin Ahmed Yordah and I have been given the privilege to serve as chair of this committee. This committee provides an opportunity to address global challenges through diplomacy, cooperation and effective policy making. I therefore encourage all delegates to engage in the sessions respectfully, conduct thorough research and work collaboratively.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Amin Ahmed Yordah

Mafata Konneh CHAIR, UNODC

Hey delegates!

Welcome to UNODC!

My name is Mafata, and I'll be serving as one of your chairs. I'm really excited to meet you all and see what you bring to committee.

We'll be tackling some pretty complex issues, from human trafficking and forced labour to organized crime and corruption, so come prepared to think critically, debate, collaborate, and most importantly, enjoy yourselves!

Do your research, know your country's policies, and don't be afraid to speak up, even if you're not completely sure of yourself. I'm looking forward to some great debates and hopefully a very memorable committee.

See you in committee!

Mafata Konneh

1.3 General Overview

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime got its start in 1997 as the UN's main body for helping countries fight illegal drugs, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism. Its work rests on a simple idea: peace and safety are hard to come by without strong laws and courts that people can actually trust. In practice, that means training police and judges, building out global crime data, and helping governments put major agreements like the Palermo Convention and the UN Convention against Corruption into real, working practice.

At DPSIMUN ’26, this committee will run under standard MUN rules. The UNODC cannot deploy armies or force any country's hand, so delegates will instead work together to draft papers that set clear global standards, help countries share intelligence, and strengthen the laws that let criminals be extradited across borders. Doing that well means protecting your own country's interests while still being willing to strike smart deals with other delegates, since no single country is going to out maneuver modern crime networks alone.

TOPIC 1

1.4 Human Trafficking, Forced Labor, and Exploitation in Crisis Zones

1.4.1 Background Information

The Palermo Protocol defines human trafficking as recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving people through force, coercion, deception, or the abuse of someone's vulnerability, all in order to exploit them. Forced labor is closely related. It happens when someone is made to work against their will through threats, violence, debt bondage, intimidation, or an abuse of authority. The two problems tend to get discussed separately, but in practice, forced labor is usually where trafficking ends up.

Conflict makes everything worse. When fighting breaks out, law enforcement weakens, jobs disappear, families are separated, and enormous numbers of people are displaced almost overnight. Criminal networks know exactly how to take advantage of that kind of chaos, recruiting vulnerable people with promises of work, schooling, or safety that never actually materialize.

Governments have tried to respond. The Palermo Protocol gave the world its first shared definition of trafficking and pushed states to both criminalize it and protect the people caught up in it. Other agreements have since built on that foundation, strengthening labor protections, improving how migration gets managed, and pushing states to cooperate rather than act alone. UNODC plays a supporting role too, helping countries update outdated laws, training investigators and prosecutors, securing borders, identifying victims, and coordinating across judicial systems. Even so, trafficking keeps adapting. Criminal groups pick up new technology fast, and they are quick to exploit whatever humanitarian crisis happens to be unfolding at the time. That is why delegates need to think beyond just writing tougher laws. Real progress also depends on better implementation, smarter use of technology, serious anti corruption work, and support systems that put victims first rather than treating them as an afterthought.

1.4.2 Historical Context

Back in the late 1990s, as internet access first started expanding worldwide, governments found themselves in an odd position: fighting crimes that crossed every border using legal tools that had been built for crimes that stayed within one. For years, the 2001 Budapest Convention was more or less the only framework available. It helped neighboring countries cooperate, but it never became a truly global standard. Meanwhile, darknet marketplaces grew more sophisticated, ransomware turned into a real criminal industry, and decentralized finance gave traffickers new ways to move money without a trace. Law enforcement kept running into the same walls again and again: evidence sharing took far too long, and plenty of jurisdictions still functioned as safe havens where syndicates could operate with little fear of ever being extradited. Eventually, it became obvious that regional agreements alone were not going to cut it. The UN General Assembly formed an ad hoc committee to negotiate something broader, and that process led directly to the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime. The treaty opened for signature in Hanoi and became the first genuinely global framework for sharing digital evidence quickly, running joint investigations, and building up technical capacity, effectively setting the modern benchmark for international cyber defense.

1.4.3 Current Situation

Human trafficking and forced labor remain among the fastest growing categories of organized crime anywhere in the world. UNODC has pointed out that conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and mass displacement all push people into far more vulnerable positions than they would otherwise be in. Refugees, internally displaced people, migrants, women, and children tend to bear the brunt of it, largely because criminal groups know exactly which institutions are too weak or too overwhelmed to protect them.

Recent crises have only made this worse. People fleeing violence often have no legal way to work, no identity documents, and no real access to social protection, which leaves them wide open to recruitment schemes built almost entirely on deception. The promise is nearly always the same: a legitimate job somewhere better. What victims actually end up facing can include forced labor, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced criminality, or forced marriage.

Technology has changed how a lot of this now operates. Traffickers rely increasingly on encrypted messaging apps, social media, and fake job postings to identify and recruit victims, sometimes without ever meeting them face to face before the exploitation begins. Cryptocurrency and other digital payment tools make it easier to hide the money trail as well, which only adds to the difficulty of tracking these networks down.

Corruption is still one of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of progress. In plenty of regions, bribes paid to border officials, police, immigration officers, or labor inspectors let trafficking networks move victims across borders with barely any risk of getting caught. Weak courts and inconsistent enforcement of anti trafficking laws only add to the problem, keeping conviction rates low even in places where the laws themselves look strong on paper. The legal frameworks exist at the international level, but putting them into practice on the ground is a different story entirely. Many countries simply do not have enough trained investigators, victim support services, or labor inspectors, and intelligence sharing across borders is often patchy at best. All of this points toward the same conclusion, which is that the world needs stronger cooperation and legal protections that can actually hold up under pressure.

1.4.4 Subtopics

1.4.4.1 Strengthening International Labor Regulations and Supply Chain Transparency

Global supply chains often hide forced labor inside industries like agriculture, mining, fishing, construction, manufacturing, and domestic work. Delegates should look at mandatory human rights due diligence, corporate accountability, ethical sourcing standards, labor inspections, and certification systems that make it harder to profit from goods produced through exploitation.

1.4.4.2 Protecting Migrant Workers and Refugees at High Risk Border Crossings

Migrants and refugees run into smugglers and traffickers constantly while crossing international borders. States should think about better refugee registration systems, legal migration pathways, humanitarian assistance, multilingual awareness campaigns, victim screening, and information sharing that catches vulnerable people before exploitation occurs rather than after.

1.4.4.3 Clamping Down on Online Job Scams and Cyber Trafficking Rings

Digital tools have completely changed how trafficking networks recruit. Delegates should discuss cybercrime cooperation across borders, monitoring fraudulent recruitment sites, regulating online employment agencies, improving digital literacy, sharing cyber intelligence, and getting governments and tech companies working together instead of past each other.

1.4.4.4 Preventing the Corruption of Border Control and Law Enforcement Officials

Corruption is what lets trafficking networks operate with something close to impunity. Delegates should look into anti corruption legislation, integrity training, financial investigations, whistleblower protections, independent oversight, and cooperation aimed at investigating the officials who make trafficking possible in the first place.

1.4.5 Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. How could member states require real transparency and human rights due diligence across supply chains in order to eliminate forced labor in high risk industries?
2. What legal mechanisms would actually protect refugees and displaced people from deceptive recruitment at the border crossings where they are most vulnerable?
3. In what ways can UNODC bring tech companies, intelligence agencies, and law enforcement together to monitor and shut down fraudulent recruitment sites?
4. Which safeguards and oversight mechanisms would meaningfully reduce corruption among border officials and labor inspectors who currently enable trafficking?

5. How should cross border financial tracking be improved so it actually targets the illicit profits generated by forced labor and online scam operations?

6. What can be done to make sure trafficking victims receive immediate protection, legal status, and support services instead of being treated as criminals themselves?

1.4.6 Useful Sites and Documents

UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons

Comprehensive global database and policy insights detailing trafficking patterns, victim demographics, and enforcement challenges worldwide.

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/glotip.html

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol)

The primary legal instrument establishing international standards for defining trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting offenders.

https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons

ILO Global Estimates of Modern Slavery

Joint research report by the International Labour Organization detailing global statistics on forced labor and modern slavery.

https://www.ilo.org/publications/global-estimates-modern-slavery-forced-labour-and-forced-marriage-1

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)

Parent treaty providing frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance, and cross border intelligence sharing.

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html

United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

The principal international treaty targeting public bribery, financial fraud, and systemic corruption that enables crime rings.

https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/uncac/index.html

1.4.7 Glossary

Human Trafficking: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of people through force, fraud, or deception in order to exploit them for profit.

Forced Labor: Work or service exacted from a person under the menace of penalty, where that person has not offered themselves for it voluntarily.

Debt Bondage: A form of forced labor where a person is pledged into servitude to repay a debt, often under conditions where the debt can never realistically be cleared.

Cyber Trafficking: The use of digital tools, encrypted apps, online job forums, and fraudulent websites to deceive, recruit, and exploit victims remotely.

Due Diligence: The process by which businesses and institutions identify, prevent, and account for human rights abuses within their own operations and supply chains.

Palermo Protocol: A landmark United Nations agreement adopted in 2000 that established the first universal legal framework for fighting human trafficking.

TOPIC 2

1.5 Combating Organized Crime Governance and Territorial Control in Volatile Conflict Zones

1.5.1 Background Information

When a central government weakens or collapses, organized crime groups rarely just retreat into the shadows. More often, they step straight into the power vacuum left behind. In volatile conflict zones around the world, armed cartels and gangs have moved well past simple smuggling and now practice something closer to actual governance. They control territory, collect their own illegal taxes, run crude systems of justice, and effectively become the authority millions of civilians have to answer to. That sets off a dangerous cycle: state weakness lets criminal rule take hold, and criminal rule then finishes off whatever state institutions were still standing.

These groups survive because they build real financial roots inside the communities they control. Through extortion, control of local markets, kidnapping, and exploiting natural resources, syndicates generate enough revenue to arm themselves privately and keep doing it. Plenty of young people join these networks not out of any real loyalty, but because the syndicate offers something the state does not: basic economic survival, physical protection, or informal work. Breaking that grip takes more than police raids or military operations. It requires cutting off the money while also giving communities a genuine economic alternative to criminal patronage.

Beyond what happens on land, criminal governance depends heavily on supply chains that stretch out to sea. Smuggling networks move high caliber weapons, ammunition, and other illicit goods through fragile waters and coastlines that nobody is really patrolling. Without a steady flow of illegal arms arriving by sea, local gangs and cartels would struggle to outgun state forces or keep entire populations intimidated. Stopping this kind of governance ultimately takes a strategy that connects local economic reform, targeted financial disruption, and serious maritime enforcement, all working to cut off supply lines before they ever reach land.

1.5.2 Historical Context

For decades, the sheer size of international waters made maritime law enforcement genuinely difficult, and criminal networks were happy to exploit both the legal loopholes and the strict limits on state sovereignty beyond a country's own territorial sea. The main framework governing the oceans came from the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and specifically its Article 108, which called on states to cooperate against drug trafficking at sea while still protecting freedom of navigation. As transnational syndicates modernized, though, they moved well beyond narcotics, building smuggling corridors for firearms, illicit oil, and trafficked people. The 2000 United

Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary protocols gave law enforcement sharper tools, but enforcement on open water stayed fragmented, held back by flag state consent rules and limited naval capacity. Recognizing how wide these operational gaps had become in fragile shipping corridors like the Gulf of Guinea and the Horn of Africa, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime launched its Global Maritime Crime Programme. That shift turned what had been fairly abstract international agreements into practical regional naval coordination, joint patrols, and legal frameworks built to actually secure global waters rather than just describe them on paper.

1.5.3 Current Situation

Criminal governance now poses a direct threat to peace and security in multiple regions at once. In Haiti, for instance, gang coalitions control large parts of the capital, running informal courts, blockading fuel terminals, and extracting payments from local businesses that have no real alternative. Similar patterns show up across parts of Latin America, West Africa, and Southeast Asia, where cartels and armed militias function as de facto authorities. These groups take advantage of political instability to carve out safe havens, and once that happens, it becomes nearly impossible for humanitarian aid, public services, or state law enforcement to operate without paying tribute or risking deadly violence.

One of the hardest parts of confronting these networks is how financially adaptable they are. While traditional law enforcement tends to focus on drug seizures, modern cartels pull revenue from a much wider range of sources, including protection rackets, illegal mining, trade based money laundering, and cryptocurrency transfers. These financial networks cross national borders easily, letting syndicate leaders park their wealth somewhere safe while local operatives keep control on the ground through terror and intimidation.

At sea, fragile coastal waters and porous maritime borders have become major routes for weapons trafficking and illegal trade. Unflagged vessels, dark fleet ships running with their trackers off, and corrupt port networks all let cartels take delivery of heavy weaponry directly from international suppliers. Naval initiatives and coast guards often lack the legal authority, the operational capacity, or the real time intelligence needed to intercept these shipments in international waters without running into thorny questions of maritime jurisdiction.

1.5.4 Subtopics

1.5.4.1 Dismantling Armed Cartels and Shadow Legal Systems in Unstable Regions

This is about how state institutions, international police coalitions, and judicial bodies can dismantle the physical control cartels hold, restore legitimate law enforcement, and shut down the informal criminal courts operating where central government presence has collapsed.

1.5.4.2 Targeting the Financial Revenue Streams and Extortion Networks of Local Gangs

This means building legal, financial, and intelligence frameworks that can actually disrupt local protection rackets, trace illicit cash and digital transfers, and freeze the international assets of gang leaders profiting from territorial control.

1.5.4.3 Improving Maritime Security and Naval Patrolling to Stop Illegal Arms Shipments

This covers strengthening regional naval cooperation, sharing intelligence, and tightening port security protocols so that unflagged ships can be interdicted, weapons smuggling curbed, and the legal loopholes around maritime jurisdiction and vessel boarding rights finally closed.

1.5.4.4 Providing Economic Support Programs to Reduce Community Reliance on Criminal Groups

This involves designing international aid, microfinance initiatives, and alternative livelihood programs that give communities a real economic alternative, weakening the pull that criminal organizations currently have on recruitment and daily life.

1.5.5 Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. How can the international community help host nations rebuild legitimate law enforcement and formal justice systems in areas currently ruled by criminal cartels?
2. What legal and technical mechanisms would let states track, freeze, and disrupt the informal taxation and extortion networks that gangs currently run unchecked?
3. How might member states refine maritime interdiction protocols under UNCLOS so suspected weapons smuggling vessels can actually be inspected in fragile or international waters?
4. What safeguards would keep economic aid and community development programs from being quietly diverted into the hands of local criminal networks?
5. How can UNODC improve intelligence sharing between naval forces, port authorities, and national agencies so illegal arms shipments are caught before reaching conflict zones?
6. What strategies could member states use to offer real protection, rehabilitation, and alternative livelihoods to youth who currently depend on local gang structures to survive?

1.5.6 Useful Sites and Documents

UNODC Organized Crime Portal

Central repository for official UN reports, data, and analytical tools regarding transnational organized crime, gang dynamics, and counter terror linkages.

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/toc.html

UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP)

Key insights, operational manuals, and field reports detailing maritime security, naval coordination, and interdiction strategies in fragile waters.

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/piracy/who-we-are.html

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)

The primary legal benchmark outlining international rules on extradition, mutual legal assistance, and organized crime prosecution.

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC)

Independent, field based research reports and global indices analyzing criminal governance, extortion networks, and gang structures worldwide.

https://globalinitiative.net/

INTERPOL Firearms and Maritime Security Databases

Tactical resources, illicit arms databases, and international alerts used to track unflagged vessels and wanted cartel operatives.

https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Firearms-trafficking

1.5.7 Glossary

Criminal Governance: A situation where organized crime groups or gangs hold authority over a specific territory, providing informal services, enforcing their own rules, and acting as the de facto governing body.

Extortion Network: An organized system where criminal groups force local businesses, residents, or transport operators to pay regular protection fees under threat of violence.

Shadow Legal System: Informal courts and enforcement methods set up by cartels or gangs to settle disputes and hand down punishments outside the state's own legal framework.

Interdiction: The legal interception, inspection, and detention of suspected vessels, vehicles, or goods in international or territorial waters by authorized law enforcement or naval forces.

Dark Fleet: Ships that deliberately turn off their Automatic Identification System trackers in order to hide their location while engaging in illegal smuggling.

Flag of Convenience: A practice where a ship is registered in a country other than that of its owners, mainly to avoid stricter regulations, taxes, or law enforcement oversight.