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United Nations
Interregional Crime and Justice
Research Institute



Environmental crimes as an emerging form of crime managed by transnational organized networks

Expert Group 2:

Environmental crimes: a growing business for organised crime and corruption

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Mandate of UNICRI:

UNICRI is a United Nations entity created in 1968 and mandated to assist

- intergovernmental,
- governmental and
- non-governmental organizations

in formulating and implementing improved policies in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice.



UNICRI goals and activities

UNICRI goals are:

- to advance understanding of crime-related problems
- to foster just and efficient criminal justice systems
- to support the respect of international instruments and other standards
- to facilitate international law enforcement cooperation and judicial assistance

UNICRI activities tackle major concerns in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice:

- organized crime and illicit trafficking
- environmental crimes
- counterfeiting
- corruption
- cyber-crime
- security governance and counter-terrorism
- violence against women and protection of victims
- juvenile justice

For UNICRI, Eco-Crimes have relevance in at least three different aspects:

1. **Organized crime** is involved in many forms of environmental crime
2. They impose a **security and safety threat** to a large number of people
3. They have a **negative impact** on the rule of law, development and economy

Why Environmental Crimes?

- Emerging form of transnational organized crime
- Led by high profits, low risk of detection, prosecution and conviction rates
- Danger to human health and environment
- Threat to security, social and economic development, posed by organized crime to infringement of right to health and life, to freely utilize their own natural resources
- Erosion of state authority: corruption, tax evasion, lawlessness



UNICRI Eco-Crime Programme

Since 1991 UNICRI is analyzing crimes against the environment

I. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Data collection and mapping of illicit trafficking cases (2005-2011)
- ✓ Identification of risk factors linked to organized crime

II. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Seminars for general public
- ✓ Awareness raising roundtables

III. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAININGS



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UNICRI expertise in analysis of Organized Crime (OC)

- Organised crime is a cross-cutting issue, linked to other serious forms of crime
- Multidisciplinary approach
- Evidence-based research for informed policy-making, ad-hoc technical assistance programmes and capacity building trainings

OC Transnational Networks involved in different criminal activities

Trade barriers' falling apart & new technological innovations

Legal systems non-homogeneous in different countries

Movements, trades, money transfers, computer exchanges facilitated by “globalisation”

Different criminal organizations cooperate for transnational criminal actions/markets

OC Transnational Networks involved in different criminal activities

Diversification of activities and interest towards licit sectors



Gradual transformation from hierarchical structures into loose networks



Higher profits & lower risks



Corruption



Violence and Intimidation

Evidence – Operation “Chinese shadows”

- Containers with recycled material directed to China from Italian port Voltri, Genoa

The case:

- Mixed, toxic and e-waste
- Italian-Chinese transnational organised network involved in illicit trade of toxic waste, existing for 5 years, with annual profit of approximately 1 million euro
- 3 Chinese and 4 Italian citizens prosecuted

Links to other serious crimes:

- Organised crime (Italian-Chinese transnational organised network)
- Corruption (companies for disposal of special waste, chemical-environmental analysts, shipping companies)
- Counterfeiting (toys made of waste)

Evidence - Operation “Grande Muraglia”

- Gioia Tauro Port 2006
- 135 containers seized with e-waste
- 32 charges
- *Italian Regions involved:*

Calabria, Puglia, Campania, Lombardia,
Lazio

- *Foreign Countries involved:*

China, India, Russia, Liberia and Nigeria

Connection with other serious crimes

Evidences of a range of other associated serious offences used to facilitate the principal offence and committed in the aftermath of an environmental crime



Counterfeiting

Corruption

Money
Laundering

Human
Trafficking

Document
fraud

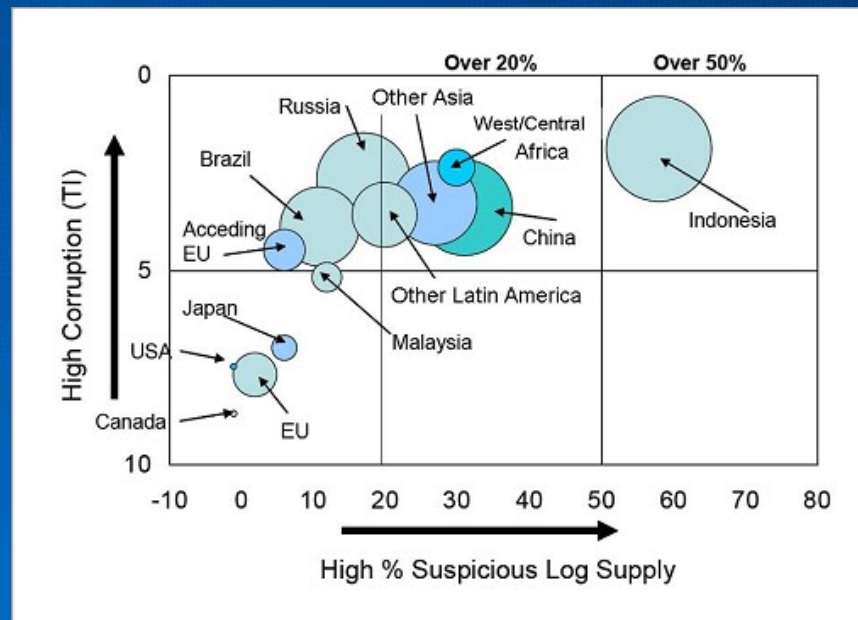
Tax
Evasion

Illicit Drugs
Trafficking

Connection with other serious crimes: evidences

Corruption in forestry sector

Supply-side corruption & Demand-side corruption



The negative relationship between good governance and illegal logging

Source: Seneca Creek Assoc. 2004

Connection with other serious crimes: evidences

Counterfeiting & Illicit Waste Management

Substandard counterfeit products can have environmentally damaging consequences

Electronic and plastic waste illegally managed can be used to produce counterfeit goods without being properly treated/recycled and with no attention to the risks for consumers

Negative impacts of counterfeiting on the environment as the growing volume of seized goods raises environmental issues

Same modus operandi / actors / routes / final product

Connection with other serious crimes: evidences

Human Trafficking in the Fishing Industry

1) Trafficking for purpose of forced labour, i.e. on board fishing vessels

2) Women and children vulnerable to organized exploitation of prostitution

Further links with corruption, other environmental crimes, illicit drugs trafficking

Connection with other serious crimes: evidences

Money Laundering

Environmental crimes can generate vast amounts of profit that need to be laundered to disguise their illegal origin

Offenders “clean” their funds by laundering the money through other equally illicit networks, thereby forming strong links to other criminal arenas

In a ‘cash economy’ such as environmental crime, alternative investigation techniques are needed in order to combat sophisticated criminals and prevent them from realising the proceeds of their crime

Proposed Recommendations

In accordance with the adopted ECOSOC Resolution, research activities should focus on providing clear evidences of the relationship between organized crime and environmental crime, analyzing their modus operandi, understanding the drivers of their decision-making process and where profits are invested

Encourage the application of advanced intelligence and investigation techniques, such as the ones envisaged by the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), in order to identify entities actively engaged in cross border environmental offences

Proposed Recommendations

Support the adoption of improved intelligence-based policies and strategies against environmental crime, through the establishment of an online searchable environmental crime intelligence database

Increase efforts to co-operate and exchange information with competent national authorities, international organizations as well as other customs administrations

Provide support in strengthening the capacities of officials personnel in detecting and prosecuting environmental crime offenders – through ad hoc specialized trainings – and in awareness raising activities



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Thank you for your attention.

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