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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL  
1279<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

14 APRIL 2025  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/CN.1279 (2025)

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**OPEN SESSION ON ORGANIZED TRANSNATIONAL CRIMES,  
PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE SAHEL REGION.**

## **OPEN SESSION ON ORGANIZED TRANSNATIONAL CRIMES, PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE SAHEL REGION.**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Sahel region has increasingly become a critical hotspot for transnational organized crime, threatening peace, stability, and development across the African continent. No longer just a transit area, the region now serves as an epicenter of illicit economies that erode the sovereignty of states and fragment social cohesion. The convergence of chronic insecurity, weak governance structures, porous borders, and limited state authority, especially in remote and under-governed areas, has created a conducive environment for criminal enterprises to flourish.

2. These conditions have allowed highly organized and adaptive criminal networks to embed themselves within the Sahel's economic and logistical landscape. These groups traffic in a wide range of illicit goods and services, including narcotics, small arms, smuggled fuel, counterfeit goods, endangered wildlife, and human beings. Increasingly, these activities are facilitated with the complicity or protection of armed non-state actors and violent extremist organizations, which benefit from the revenues to support their own operational and territorial ambitions. This dangerous overlap between organized crime and terrorism presents a significant challenge to peacebuilding and counterterrorism efforts.

3. In many parts of the region, criminal actors have established parallel systems of authority, often replacing or coexisting with state institutions. They provide protection, resolve disputes, and even impose their own forms of governance, frequently through coercive means. Their operations transcend borders and adapt quickly to enforcement actions, making them difficult to dismantle without coordinated, multilateral strategies.

4. In light of these challenges, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union will convene an Open Session on 14 May 2025 to address the growing threat of transnational organized crime in the Sahel. The session will give particular attention to the major criminal corridors spanning the region, the operational interplay between criminal and terrorist actors, and the institutional responses needed to disrupt and dismantle these networks.

5. This high-level session will provide a platform for AU Member States, AFRIPOL, regional organizations, and international partners to engage in constructive dialogue, exchange intelligence, and put forward policy and operational recommendations. The discussion will also focus on leveraging AFRIPOL's capabilities to strengthen intelligence-led policing, promote joint border operations, and build the predictive capacity of national law enforcement to anticipate and respond to evolving threats in real time.

### **II. BACKGROUND**

6. In fighting against Organized Transnational Crimes, the AU adopted instruments on Transnational Organized Crimes such as the June 2006 AU Migration Framework; the November 2006 Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking on Human Beings, especially Women and Children; the 2014 Niamey Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation; the August 2019 AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention 2019-2023; the December 2018 Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organized Crimes Project; the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes as well as the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa. There is a need to take stock of the implementation of these instruments on Transnational Organised Crimes on the continent.

7. At its 1082<sup>nd</sup> meeting held on 6 May 2022, on Organised Transnational Crimes, among others, the PSC reiterated the primary responsibility of Member States and the importance of collective security approaches in the fight against Transnational Organized Crimes and encouraged those Member States, which had not yet done so, to sign, ratify, domesticate and implement all relevant regional, Continental and international instruments as well as to promulgate necessary legislative and judicial measures, to combat money laundering and illicit financial flows, strengthen weapons management to mitigate illicit proliferation and circulation, promote joint border management and the recovery of misappropriated natural resources.

8. The meeting, also reiterated the need for judicial and law enforcement cooperation among Member States through extradition agreements, investigations and prosecution for crossborder crimes, the adhesion to the Malabo Protocol on the establishment of a Criminal Chamber in the African Court of Human and Peoples Rights whose Article 28 gives the court jurisdiction over transnational organized crimes and the need for a comprehensive African Convention on Transnational Organized Crimes.

9. Furthermore, the PSC emphasized the need for comprehensive approaches in addressing the root causes and enablers of Organized Transnational Crimes, such as porous borders, payment of ransom, the financing of terrorism and violent extremism, and in this respect, further emphasized the need to preserve the civilian character of refugee camps, and to combat the flow of illicit firearms and psychotropic substances, and the proliferation of Transnational Organized Crimes within these camps, the PSC requested the Commission to continue to providing necessary technical support to Member States and regional institutions and mechanisms, within the context of implementing the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2030.

### **III. CURRENT SITUATION OF ORGANISED TRANSNATIONAL CRIMES IN THE SAHEL REGION**

10. Organized Transnational Crimes in the Sahel is not an isolated phenomenon. It is deeply entrenched within the region's socio-political, security, and economic landscape.

11. The fragility of state institutions, coupled with chronic insecurity and economic hardship, has enabled criminal and armed groups to develop sophisticated cross-border logistics networks. These networks are not only resilient but are also increasingly integrated, taking advantage of weak border control, limited surveillance capacities, and the absence of effective coordination between neighboring states.

12. Several major transnational corridors now form the backbone of illicit economies across the Sahel. The Lagos–Kano–Agadez–Tripoli corridor is widely used for migrant smuggling and the trafficking of Tramadol, a synthetic opioid increasingly abused across the region. The Bamako–Gao–Tamanrasset route is dominated by arms and fuel trafficking, feeding both non-state actors and criminal enterprises operating in the central Sahel. Meanwhile, the Dakar–Ziguinchor–Bissau route has become a principal conduit for South American cocaine entering West Africa before moving inland or onward to Europe.

13. Other corridors reflect the link between crime and violent extremism. The Diffa–Lake Chad–Maiduguri route functions as a vital hub for logistics and human trafficking in support of groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). In the eastern Sahel, the Port Sudan–Khartoum–Bangui corridor has emerged as a strategic supply chain for arms trafficking, with shipments often concealed under the guise of humanitarian or diplomatic cargo.

14. These corridors are highly dynamic and adaptive, with routes and tactics evolving in response to law enforcement pressure and shifting political conditions. Their entrenchment has produced criminal architectures that challenge the capacity and sovereignty of States, overwhelming national law enforcement agencies and undermining efforts at regional stabilization.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES:

15. This PSC meeting aims at the following:

- a) Raising awareness among AU Member States and partners on the nature, trends, and implications of transnational organized crime in the Sahel;
- b) Providing a strategic overview of AFRIPOL's criminal analysis and intelligence on the region;
- c) Sharing best practices and propose scalable measures to dismantle the criminal logistics chains;
- d) Exploring synergies for cross-border operational collaboration, intelligence sharing, and judicial cooperation;
- e) Mobilizing political will for integrated and well-resourced continental responses.

#### V. EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

16. At the end of the meeting, it is expected that the PSC will, among others, adopt a communiqué containing the following recommendations:

- a) **Emphasize** the need for developing joint mobile border units, enhancing surveillance of key corridors, and involving local communities in the prevention of Organised Transnational Crimes in the Sahel Region;
- b) **Stress** the need for a deeper understanding by PSC members and stakeholders of the criminal routes and their impact on regional peace and security;
- c) **Request** the AU Commission to strengthen AFRIPOL's mandate and operational capacity to support Member States in criminal intelligence and interdiction;
- d) **Endorsement** of a regional criminal corridor database to be managed by AFRIPOL and made interoperable with national law enforcement platforms;
- e) **Reiterate** the primary responsibility of Member States and collective security approaches in the fight against Transnational Organized Crimes and, in the context, encourage those Member States, which have not yet done so, to sign, ratify, domesticate and implement all relevant regional, Continental and international instruments as well as promulgate necessary legislative and judicial measures, to combat money laundering and illicit financial flows, strengthen weapons management to mitigate illicit proliferation and circulation, promote joint border management and the recovery of misappropriated natural resources;

- f) **Reiterate** the need for judicial and law enforcement cooperation among Member States through extradition agreements, investigations and prosecution for crossborder crimes, the adhesion to the Malabo Protocol on the establishment of a Criminal Chamber in the African Court of Human and Peoples Rights whose Article 28 gives the court jurisdiction over transnational organized crimes and the need for a comprehensive African Convention on Transnational Organized Crimes; and
- g) **Emphasize** the need for establishing comprehensive approaches in addressing the root causes and enablers of Organized Transnational Crimes, such as porous borders, payment of ransom, the financing of terrorism and violent extremism.

## VI. DATE, VENUE AND FORMAT

17. The meeting will be held virtually through the Zoom platform on Wednesday, 14 May 2025, starting at 10 a.m., Addis Ababa time. It will be conducted in both official languages of the AU: English and French.