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**Integration and coordination of efforts by the
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and by
Member States in the field of crime prevention and
criminal justice: other activities in support of the
work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and
Crime, in particular activities of the United Nations
crime prevention and criminal justice programme
network, non-governmental organizations and
other bodies**

Report of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

Note by the Secretary-General

The report of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) was prepared pursuant to article IV, paragraph 3 (e), of the statute of UNICRI and approved by a decision of the Board taken at its meeting held on 22 and 23 October 2024, for submission to the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Results achieved by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

Report of the Board of Trustees

I. Introduction

1.   The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) was established as a United Nations entity and part of the United Nations system pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1086 B (XXXIX) of 1965. It is governed by its Board of Trustees, which provides strategic direction and sets priorities.

2.   Under its broad mandate to develop and implement improved policies in crime prevention and control, UNICRI strives to promote justice, strengthen the rule of law and address security threats, in support of peace and sustainable development.

3.   UNICRI focuses on specialized niches and selected areas related to transnational organized crime, justice, counter-terrorism, security governance and innovation. The Institute contributes to United Nations policy and operations and supports Member States through its specialized and action-oriented research, training initiatives and capacity-building programmes. Through its action-oriented approach to research, the Institute serves as a conduit for innovative solutions to traditional and emerging challenges, channelling expertise from within and outside the United Nations system.

4.   Relying on its strongly evidence-based and data-driven approach, UNICRI delivers an integrative programme of work. It provides a coherent research-to-practice continuum, emphasizing methodical analysis, needs assessment and the development of good practices, which in turn informs the design, implementation, and evaluation of programmes in support of learning.

5.   Following the first formal oral report of UNICRI to the Economic and Social Council, delivered in accordance with Council decision 2022/338, the Council, in its resolution 2023/8, acknowledged the role of UNICRI as a valuable component of the United Nations system and a contributor to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the same resolution, the Council encouraged UNICRI to continue its efforts to advance evidence-based and data-centric approaches to address the global challenges of transnational organized crime in its many evolving dimensions and to promote the rule of law.

6.   The present report of the Board of Trustees contains a summary of the work carried out by UNICRI in 2024 in line with the UNICRI Strategic Programme Framework for 2023–2026.

A. Strategic Programme Framework for 2023–2026

7.   On the basis of its research, needs assessments and analyses of evolving trends, as well as engagement and consultations with Member States, United Nations entities and international organizations, academic and government institutions, subject-matter experts, non-governmental organizations, programme partners, and beneficiaries of UNICRI projects and research, UNICRI identified the following interrelated transnational crime and justice threats and challenges in its Strategic Programme Framework for the period 2023–2026:

  (a)   Rising insecurity and terrorism;

  (b)   Reach of organized crime;

  (c)   Role of new and emerging technologies;

  (d)   Human rights abuses and exploitation.

8.   Responding to those threats and challenges, the Framework contains the following five strategic priorities, which govern the activities described in the present report:

(a)   Preventing and countering transnational security threats, terrorism and points of nexus;

(b)   Countering criminal enterprises, illicit financial flows and corrupt practices;

(c)   Promoting the responsible use of new and emerging technologies to address crime and exploitation;

(d)   Preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization;

(e)   Promoting the rule of law and safeguarding access to justice.

These priorities also reflect the critical importance of gender, climate change and youth as cross-cutting considerations.

9.   The Institute's work under the priorities set out in the Strategic Programme Framework directly aligns with and supports the implementation of the Pact for the Future, adopted by the General Assembly in 2024, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That alignment is particularly evident in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is focused on peace, justice and strong institutions.

B.   UNICRI Gender Strategy

10.   Complementing the Strategic Programme Framework for 2023–2026, the UNICRI Gender Strategy outlines the Institute's commitment to gender as a cross-cutting theme and highlights its focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

11.   The Gender Strategy acknowledges that effective gender-specific action must be adaptive to the diversity among people, cultures and localities. As a living instrument, the Strategy evolves and adapts to the rapidly changing world, making it ideally suited to the complex and dynamic aspects of the Institute's work in the areas of transnational crime, security and justice, including their myriad intersections. In addition, tools, guidelines and resources are included in an addendum to the Strategy in order to guide the application of the Strategy and realize its objectives.

C.   Tools and approaches

12.   Addressing the specialized niches and selected fields under its mandate, UNICRI continued to expand its multisectoral and holistic approach through action-oriented research, the exchange and dissemination of knowledge, training and technical assistance, the creation of strong partnerships and policy support.

13.   UNICRI conducted research to expand knowledge and understanding of specific problems and to facilitate better-tailored interventions. The Institute produced and disseminated 15 publications, on a wide range of topics, including the following:

(a)   *Not Just Another Tool: Public Perceptions on Police Use of Artificial Intelligence*;

(b)   Three issues of the e-journal entitled *1540 Compass*;

(c)   The issue of *Freedom From Fear Magazine (F3)* entitled "Is never again becoming time and again?";

(d)   "Assessing risks at the intersection of climate insecurity and violent extremism: key insights and recommendations from the design workshop" (in reference to the workshop held in Dakar from 29 to 31 July 2024);

(e)   *Generative Artificial Intelligence: A New Threat for Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*;

(f)   "UNICRI's strategic response framework for tackling crimes linked to critical minerals";

(g)   *Good Practices in Accelerating the Capture of Illicitly-Acquired Assets*;

(h)   *Analysis of Lone Attacks as a Challenge for Preventing Violent Extremism from a Comparative Perspective: Types of Lone Attackers and Their Radicalization Processes in Japan, and Recommendations for Prevention Measures*;

(i)   *Cultural Heritage Smuggling and the Nexus with Terrorism*;

(j)   *Beneath the Surface: Terrorist and Violent Extremist Use of the Dark Web and Cybercrime-as-a-Service for Cyber-Attacks*;

(k)   *The Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism in Latin America*;

(l)   *A Prosecutor's Guide to Radiological and Nuclear Crimes*;

(m)   *Digital Rehabilitation in Prison*.

14.   The research carried out by the Institute supports the formulation of targeted policies, strategies and practices that can be implemented by Member States. By disseminating qualitative and quantitative data and analysing the latest trends, the Institute has helped raise awareness of the needs and gaps in each specific focus area.

15.   The Institute's training and learning activities have actively contributed to the transfer and dissemination of the expertise it has acquired through the implementation of projects and programmes under its five strategic priorities. The Institute's in-house capacity to design, deliver, manage and evaluate learning activities, along with its growing network of experts and partnerships, has enabled it to organize an extensive programme of in-person and online training activities.

16.   Applying the findings and lessons learned from its research, UNICRI has continued to provide training, on-the-ground practical advice and mentoring in highly specialized areas related to crime and justice. It has also advised counterparts on crime-, justice- and security-related issues at both the policy and operational levels, thereby enabling them to respond more effectively to specific and emerging challenges. In that connection, UNICRI has delivered its projects and programmes at the national, regional and international levels, benefiting a wide range of stakeholders. In 2024, the Institute conducted more than 50 specialized training activities for approximately 3,000 trainees.

17.   The Institute has employed various methods to enhance learning and awareness-raising, such as hosting international online conferences, workshops, specialized courses for practitioners, and the annual Master of Laws programmes in Transnational Crime and Justice and in Cybercrime, Cybersecurity and International Law. Those efforts have been strengthened through the Institute's publications, including its *Freedom from Fear Magazine*, policy papers and specialized materials produced in the framework of research projects, training endeavours and field operations.

18.   Through its websites, social media platforms, reports, campaigns and videos, UNICRI has significantly contributed to reinforcing knowledge of priority issues within its mandate and the relevant tools available to address them.

19.   The work undertaken by UNICRI in 2024 was funded exclusively by voluntary contributions. Its primary donors included Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, the Republic of Korea, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Additional support was provided by the European Union, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and SICPA.

20. UNICRI delivered its programme of activities through its headquarters in Turin, and through liaison offices in Rome and New York, a project office in Brussels, the Knowledge Centre "Security Improvements through Research, Technology and Innovation" in Geneva, the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in The Hague and the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence in Abu Dhabi, Algiers, Amman, Manila, Nairobi, Rabat, Tashkent and Tbilisi. UNICRI actively participates in United Nations system coordination mechanisms in the locations where it has an official presence.

II. Preventing and countering transnational security threats, terrorism and points of nexus

21. Responding to trends and developments in the area of global security threats, UNICRI continued to work with national authorities and, in particular, security services and law enforcement and counter-terrorism agencies across key niche areas and nexus points to implement innovative programmes.

A. Protection of public institutions, infrastructure and soft targets

22. The global security landscape continues to be marked by sophisticated threats to vulnerable targets such as crowded spaces and critical infrastructure. UNICRI has contributed to enhancing integrated strategies by emphasizing sustainability and aligning security planning with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the areas of environmental protection, gender equality, social inclusion and human rights. Those efforts promote adaptable frameworks that address evolving risks while supporting safety, security and resilience.

23. Leveraging its extensive work in security planning, UNICRI updated its handbooks on security planning and on public-private partnerships, providing Member States with advanced resources to assess and enhance their preparedness and develop coordinated responses.

24. In cooperation with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security of the Caribbean Community, UNICRI designed and delivered training in preparation for the Cricket World Cup for Member States in the Caribbean, addressing key aspects of event security planning and culminating in the development of regional security guidelines. In addition, UNICRI organized a regional workshop focused on security for festivals, carnivals and cultural events. Those efforts brought together key stakeholders to exchange best practices and identify effective strategies for safeguarding large gatherings. The workshop provided a foundation for future regional approaches to cultural event security through the development of actionable recommendations.

25. Under the same initiative with OAS, UNICRI supported the establishment of a coordination mechanism between Mexico, the United States and Canada in preparation for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup 2026. The initiative will also serve as a case study for the development of guidelines on the co-hosting of major events, which are scheduled for release in 2026. In coordination with the Government of Ecuador, UNICRI and OAS finalized a comprehensive tourism security strategy, while a post-event evaluation of the Pan American Games held in Chile in 2023 provided actionable insights for future event security planning.

26. UNICRI continued to support the Global Programme for the Protection of Vulnerable Targets of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, in cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. UNICRI presented its consolidated methodology on tourism security and public-private partnerships, to be considered for use in the national strategies of Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Mauritania. Those efforts highlighted practical steps

tailored to local contexts, combining international best practices with regional insights to enhance the protection of vulnerable spaces while addressing economic and public safety concerns.

27. To enhance collaboration with regional organizations, UNICRI engaged with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to support security capacity-building in Central Asia. It also participated in policy dialogues organized by the Council of Europe and the African Union, presenting its methodologies and tools for protecting vulnerable targets. Those efforts reflect the Institute's growing number of partnerships with regional organizations, which are aimed at fostering the sharing of expertise and coordinated responses in relation to regional and transnational security challenges.

28. In addition, UNICRI supported the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in enhancing the capacity of law enforcement authorities to regulate the availability of explosives for civilian use.

B. Nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism

29. UNICRI expanded the implementation of "The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism", developed with and endorsed by the Global Counterterrorism Forum, and the related Policy Toolkit, which facilitates efforts to put those good practices into action. Those tools have continued to assist Member States in assessing the extent and impact of the nexus between organized crime and terrorism and in developing policies, strategies and initiatives to address it.

30. Consultations with criminal justice actors and members of needs assessment missions underscored that preventing and countering the nexus between terrorism and organized crime required heightened efforts to improve inter-agency cooperation and cross-border collaboration at both the strategic and operational levels. Emphasis was also placed on the need to revitalize existing tools, mechanisms and cooperation platforms, as well as to reinforce both public-private partnerships aimed at benefiting criminal investigations and the engagement of communities, to ensure long-term impact.

31. Under the Institute's work, key areas in which criminality intersects with terrorism have been identified in North and West Africa, including trafficking in arms, people, drugs and cultural property, the illicit trade in natural resources, and kidnapping for ransom. While the motivations of terrorist and organized criminal groups may differ, they share a common interest in exploiting opportunities and resources to the detriment of regional security.

32. To mitigate the damaging effects of the nexus between organized crime and terrorism within and between the regions of sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa and prevent spillover to other global regions, UNICRI, in partnership with UNODC, supported Algeria, Benin, Mali and Togo by strengthening cross-border cooperation and providing capacity-building support to national policymakers and criminal justice officials. Technical guidance on how to prevent and counter the intersections between terrorism and organized crime was also provided to Burkina Faso, Libya, Mauritania, and Tunisia.

33. In its continuing effort to expand knowledge and understanding of the nexus between organized crime and terrorism, UNICRI published several reports on the nexus in different spheres of activity. That included, most notably, a study on the smuggling of cultural property and its nexus with terrorism, highlighting how terrorists exploit such smuggling as a source of terrorism financing. That work shed light on how the illicit trade in antiquities involves the exploitation of inconsistent legal frameworks, under which looted or stolen artifacts are often allowed to become legal goods owing to regulatory gaps. Legal inconsistencies and the absence of international standards hinder efforts to regulate the trade in antiquities and assess its

role in the financing of terrorism. At the same time, law enforcement authorities face difficulties in combating the smuggling of antiquities owing to a lack of relevant specialized training and resources. Such trade is difficult to track, as there are typically few records and little evidence of transactions, making tax collection and prosecution problematic. Despite mounting intelligence on the links between antiquities trafficking and terrorist organizations such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida, concrete legal evidence remains scarce and further research needs to be carried out.

34. Another study focused more broadly on the nexus between terrorism and organized crime at the regional level, specifically in Latin America. It revealed that armed groups and non-State actors operating in Latin America, using tactics similar to those used by terrorists, have refined their capabilities in the areas of overlap between crime and terrorism and demonstrated innovation in areas such as financing, recruitment and logistics. Furthermore, in the study, it was posited that, as those groups and actors continued to globalize and leverage the expertise of actors outside Latin America, their proficiency appeared likely to continue to improve, and it was noted that their criminal enterprises and potential for enabling terrorist activities had expanded through a growing web of transnational criminal organizations. As that situation unfolded, organizational learning across groups, cultures and criminal environments would increase their abilities to operate in diverse regions and fields. The report consequently recommended that efforts to work transnationally and across continents in addressing that threat be increased.

C. Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear safety and security

35. In order to mitigate the risks associated with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials and weapons, UNICRI continued to deploy a wide range of tools in 2024 through partnerships, action-oriented research and the provision of technical assistance to multiple actors worldwide, tailoring its approach to the particular dynamics of specific countries, regions and local contexts.

36. Within the framework of the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative, which engaged 63 Member States in extensive activities to mitigate CBRN risks, UNICRI actively organized and participated in several meetings of the national CBRN Teams to support efforts to achieve progress in developing and implementing national CBRN action plans. Notably, the national CBRN action plan of the United Republic of Tanzania was formally endorsed by that country's Prime Minister, while Armenia finalized its national action plan, pending government approval, and the Republic of Moldova agreed to review its national action plan.

37. Through the Centres of Excellence Initiative, UNICRI also supported various capacity-building efforts. For example, at the second edition of the CBRN Centres of Excellence Academy, held in Turin, Italy, training on project design, fundraising and capacity-building was provided to participants from all partner countries. Field and tabletop exercises were conducted to enhance operational readiness. UNICRI coordinated a counter-terrorism training exercise in Lebanon in which CBRN-related scenarios were addressed. In collaboration with the Republic of Moldova, UNICRI piloted a crime scene-to-courtroom simulation of the handling of CBRN incidents by judicial authorities. In addition, UNICRI held workshops on communication and disinformation in relation to risks in Central Asia and South-East Asia.

38. To advance regional collaboration, UNICRI organized key events, including eight regional strategic coordination meetings. During the strategic coordination meeting held in Zambia, representatives of countries in East and Central Africa discussed the movement of CBRN materials across borders. Interregional coordination efforts included the holding of a meeting of heads of the secretariats of the CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence in Rome, at which the road map for the period 2024–2025 was developed to guide the strategic work of the Centres of Excellence Initiative's eight regional secretariats.

39. In 2024, UNICRI conducted activities to prevent and combat chemical terrorism. In partnership with UNODC, UNICRI supported Indonesia in identifying, detecting, disrupting and responding to the acquisition, development and use of chemical weapons by non-State actors for terrorist purposes. Focusing on prevention strategies, multisectoral cooperation and security measures, UNICRI delivered capacity-building activities on chemical terrorism to raise awareness and enhance national authorities' knowledge of the complexities of chemical terrorism threats and the risks associated with hazardous chemicals and their potential infiltration into the legitimate supply chain. In addition, UNICRI assisted the Government of Indonesia in formulating policy recommendations to inform the development of national strategies aimed at preventing and responding to chemical terrorism. That was expected to result in a more informed, coordinated and proactive response to the evolving threat of chemical terrorism.

40. In 2024, UNICRI was committed to fostering cooperation and enhancing the capacities of State security and law enforcement officials in executing intelligence operations to thwart attempts to traffic radiological and nuclear materials. In the Black Sea region, UNICRI facilitated the incorporation of a training curriculum on countering trafficking in radiological and nuclear materials into the existing national training systems of countries in the region, thereby contributing to the long-term sustainability of nuclear security training. Following the provision of regular coaching, mentoring sessions and educational support to national instructors, some regional training institutions independently conducted the initial training sessions for those instructors. To enhance regional and national inter-agency cooperation, UNICRI organized regular events for intelligence, regulatory and law enforcement authorities of the three countries of the region, as well as for representatives of other Member States and international organizations, to share case studies, experiences and challenges related to combating radiological and nuclear smuggling in the region.

41. To combat the risks posed by the financing of the proliferation of CBRN materials and weapons in South-East Asia, in 2024, UNICRI equipped key stakeholders in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines with knowledge and tools to enhance their capabilities in investigating and disrupting proliferation financing-related activities through the timely identification of red flags, financial intelligence-gathering and analysis, and other investigative strategies. Through regional expert-level training workshops, the awareness of emerging trends and risks, in particular in relation to cyberattacks and virtual assets and measures needed to mitigate related threats, was significantly improved. Moreover, the training delivered by UNICRI equipped stakeholders from various sectors with essential tools to enhance national compliance with international norms and sanctions aimed at countering proliferation financing, including practical exercises simulating real-life scenarios related to sanctions enforcement. Through that approach, which combined theory and practice, UNICRI established a sustainable network of national counter-proliferation experts who can effectively ensure compliance with and enforcement of international obligations and standards at the national level, ultimately improving the overall counter-proliferation financing regime.

42. In 2024, UNICRI was very active in conducting research and publishing its findings. UNICRI published *A Prosecutor's Guide to Radiological and Nuclear Crimes* in close coordination with over 30 subject matter experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency, UNODC, the International Association of Prosecutors, the European Commission Joint Research Centre and other partners. A series of capacity-building and training courses on building a case for the prosecution and adjudication of CBRN crimes were developed and tested in practice in Singapore and Ukraine.

43. UNICRI completed the development of the *Toolkit on Effective CBRN Planning and Response for Policymakers and CBRN Managers*, along with its concise companion document, the "Toolkit checklist". The toolkit provides a practical framework that outlines key measures for designing and implementing effective strategies to respond to CBRN threats, while the checklist offers a clear, actionable

summary of the essential steps and elements required for addressing CBRN incidents, thus serving as a valuable quick-reference tool. Those resources offer countries a practical means to identify gaps in their planning and response capabilities and can serve as a foundation for future initiatives aimed at strengthening national capacities to address the complex challenges of the response to CBRN threats.

44.   Following the production of the *Handbook to Combat CBRN Disinformation*, UNICRI developed and implemented training materials to detect, analyse and debunk disinformation, including a tabletop exercise entitled "Krypton vs. Iron", aimed at simulating how to effectively respond to real-time CBRN disinformation campaigns. The purpose of the exercise was to raise awareness of the importance of a coordinated, strategic response to the extremely high volumes of CBRN disinformation. The exercise was carried out as part of a comprehensive training programme for countries of Central Asia on risk communication and media engagement in crisis situations that might evolve during mass gatherings. UNICRI also carried out the exercise in Ukraine in partnership with the European Union CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative and under the aegis of the 2024 Italian presidency of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

D.   Crime and security implications of complex global crises

45.   The conflict in Ukraine has intensified security threats and heightened political, economic, social and environmental fragility in the wider region. Hybrid (in-person and online) criminal activities and various forms of trafficking, including trafficking in persons, weapons, drugs and radiological materials, have undermined national security. Building on its publication entitled *The Conflict in Ukraine and Its Impact on Organized Crime and Security: A Snapshot of Key Trends*, UNICRI implemented initiatives to strengthen the capacities of criminal justice systems and law enforcement agencies in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to address those growing challenges. The initiatives included capacity-building programmes, the provision of assistance in policy development and efforts to enhance cross-border cooperation and were aimed at strengthening institutional resilience and addressing complex transnational threats such as trafficking and organized crime.

46.   In the Republic of Moldova, UNICRI supported a range of technical activities, including training on data protection; the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda; and the development of a comprehensive national action plan to combat illicit drug supply chains, in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The action plan addresses key challenges, such as combating the smuggling of synthetic drugs, preventing online illicit drug sales and developing new legislation on explosives. Those efforts were informed by a comprehensive needs assessment and were aimed at aligning national practices with international standards while, at the same time, enhancing law enforcement capacities in the relevant areas.

47.   In response to reports by authorities in Ukraine of a loss of control over significant quantities of radioactive material and concerns about their potential smuggling and links to criminal groups, UNICRI supported the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in strengthening their intelligence-gathering and analysis capacities to prevent trafficking in radiological and nuclear materials. In addition, UNICRI facilitated workshops and exercises aimed at enhancing cooperation between agencies in both countries, thereby improving their ability to address those shared security threats by means of online investigations.

III. Countering criminal enterprises, illicit financial flows and corrupt practices

A. Facilitating the seizure, confiscation and recovery of assets

48. UNICRI provided technical advice to prosecutors and related officials in multiple countries in relation to cases involving illicitly acquired assets, including in Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia. UNICRI initiated discussions with justice sector officials on cases involving stolen and converted assets located in multiple jurisdictions in Europe, as well as cases involving assets held outside Europe. Those efforts included the development of strategies to prioritize assets linked to acts of corruption, such as cash, bank accounts, real estate and aircraft, and the facilitation of minimized friction in discussions with counterparts in jurisdictions within the European Union, as well as within the United Kingdom and the United States. For example, UNICRI facilitated peer-to-peer missions involving direct meetings between prosecutors and justice sector officials in those foreign jurisdictions to address and overcome obstacles in major pending cases, some of which involved assets valued at well over $10 million.

49. With financial support from the European Union, UNICRI provided similar guidance to officials in other countries, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Libya and Ukraine, on major pending cases. The combined assets in those cases were valued at well over $6 billion and included looted cash, gold, diamonds, aircraft and assets that had been converted into real estate or other types of assets, such as bonds. Those assets were spread across multiple jurisdictions. One case led to the seizure of over $40 million in gold, while another resulted in a commitment to return two large aircraft.

50. UNICRI also provided expert technical advice on modalities that countries might wish to explore, enhance or adopt, such as value-based confiscation, extended confiscation, and civil and other forms of non-conviction-based forfeiture. Similar expert advice was provided on how to accelerate the seizure and confiscation of assets while still allowing for due process. That included the expanded and measured use of reconciliation and the introduction or strengthening of unexplained wealth orders or similar legal frameworks relating to unjust enrichment.

51. In addition, UNICRI facilitated the procurement of key materials needed for investigations in cases involving high-level corruption, such as camouflaged cameras and recording equipment, to allow investigators and prosecutors to legally record evidence of corruption.

52. Furthermore, at the request of the European Union, UNICRI facilitated efforts to create an informal regional network of asset recovery practitioners for the Southern Neighbourhood of the European Union. While some related efforts appear to have been initiated by other entities, UNICRI will seek to ensure that such a network materializes and will provide additional support to that end. Such a network would allow asset recovery practitioners in the region to more easily discuss and share information, good practices and lessons learned in relation to cases involving illicitly acquired assets, particularly those that have crossed international borders.

B. Counterfeiting, fraudulent goods and supply chain integrity

53. UNICRI continued to disseminate knowledge and lessons learned regarding current and emerging threats posed by organized crime in supply chain security, thereby supporting the development of improved national and regional responses to combat crime in that field. In 2024, UNICRI focused on the emerging issue of critical minerals for the transition to a green economy, assessing in that regard the opportunities that the transition presents to organized criminal groups at both the illegal mining and trafficking stages. Particular attention was given to the conditions that allow criminals to infiltrate the legitimate supply chain and how technology could

support law enforcement responses by facilitating improved monitoring, detection, investigation and prosecution of such illegal activities.

54. To collect first-hand feedback on that issue, a regional workshop was held in Phnom Penh. The workshop involved key national authorities and stakeholders from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Italy, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa and Viet Nam. The workshop facilitated the sharing of experiences and the obtaining of first-hand information from front-line officers dealing with illegal mining and trafficking in critical "green" minerals in their daily work. Participants also discussed how technological advances could help to address and combat such threats by supporting customs officers, field inspectors and investigators.

55. In cooperation with the European Union Intellectual Property Office, UNICRI created an international version of the publication entitled "The international intellectual property crime investigation and prosecution handbook" with the goal of increasing knowledge of the various ways in which the infringement of intellectual property rights is manifested and of ways to improve the effectiveness of relevant national and international responses. The new version of the handbook includes investigative procedures and practices from countries outside the European Union and addresses the protection of trade secrets.

56. In cooperation with the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy of Italy, UNICRI launched an initiative aimed at creating investigative guidelines for law enforcement agencies in Italy on various types of intellectual property crimes, especially those in which the use of technology plays a key role in the modus operandi of the perpetrators or in cases in which the use of technology plays a key role in the investigation of such crimes. In 2024, the first set of guidelines, focused on online sales of counterfeit products carried out through social media, was prepared. The guidelines are the result of close cooperation with law enforcement agencies in Italy, which will commence the testing of the guidelines in the field. Additional investigative guidelines will be created on the basis of that model.

IV. Promoting responsible use of new and emerging technologies to address crime and exploitation

57. Traditional information and communications technologies, such as the Internet and social media, as well as new and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, augmented and virtual reality, the metaverse and decentralized technologies, continue to be some of the most defining elements of the present generation. As those technologies advance at unparalleled rates and technical and financial barriers to their entry into the market are lowered, they are playing an increasingly important role in public safety and global security, from the perspectives of both use and misuse.

58. Recognizing that trend, UNICRI continued to support Member States throughout 2024 in better understanding innovation in that area and reinforcing their capacity to navigate the risks and opportunities presented by rapid advances in technology through targeted and tailored knowledge development and policy support.

A. Governance and frameworks of artificial intelligence

59. Through its Centre for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotics, UNICRI has strived to advance the understanding of artificial intelligence throughout the criminal justice sector globally, in particular in relation to how that technology can enhance law enforcement capabilities and awareness of the need to identify and address potential risks, both those that are unforeseen and those stemming from the misuse of the technology by malicious actors.

60.   The "Toolkit for responsible artificial intelligence (AI) innovation in law enforcement", launched by UNICRI and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), was relaunched in 2024 following an extensive testing phase involving national and local law enforcement agencies in 15 Member States. The resources developed as part of the toolkit serve as the foundation for the guidance and support requested by law enforcement agencies relating to the responsible use of artificial intelligence, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and understanding to responsibly tap into the positive potential of artificial intelligence.

61.   A training curriculum based on the toolkit was also developed, and initial pilot training sessions were delivered for law enforcement agencies in the Caribbean region in partnership with the Caribbean Community, the Arab region in partnership with the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, and Europe in partnership with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training.

62.   A survey conducted in 2023 as part of the development of the toolkit resulted in the publication in 2024 of a report on public perceptions of the use of artificial intelligence in law enforcement. The report, entitled *Not Just Another Tool: Public Perceptions on Police Use of Artificial Intelligence*, contains an analysis of feedback from more than 700 respondents worldwide on their feelings about artificial intelligence and its use by law enforcement authorities, and highlights that, among the public, there is general support for such use, provided that additional care is taken and precautionary measures are implemented by the law enforcement community.

63.   UNICRI also conducted complementary research on the human rights implications of using artificial intelligence systems for anonymized crowd monitoring and anomaly detection, and on communication strategies to foster citizens' awareness of and trust in the use of such systems to improve public safety. The aim of the research was to develop recommendations for decision-makers in law enforcement agencies and related authorities on how to meaningfully and effectively engage citizens.

64.   Through its Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Safer Children initiative, UNICRI significantly expanded its AI for Safer Children Global Hub, a unique repository of artificial intelligence-based tools for law enforcement agencies investigating crimes against children. Efforts to increase the content and user base of the Global Hub were enhanced throughout 2024, with the number of tools on the Global Hub growing to more than 100 tools from 40 different technology providers. The number of users also grew, to more than 1,000 law enforcement investigators from 255 different law enforcement agencies in 120 Member States.

65.   After the establishment of the AI for Safer Children Global Hub as a key resource for investigators, attention shifted in 2024 to operationalizing the knowledge contained in the Global Hub through the expansion of a specialized training programme for law enforcement agencies. The curriculum of the programme is focused on developing knowledge related to artificial intelligence and integrating artificial intelligence into investigative workflows in child abuse and exploitation cases. In 2024, training courses were delivered to 28 Member States through 12 national or regional training events, benefiting 2,265 law enforcement officers.

66.   UNICRI also expanded its focus on artificial intelligence and child abuse, exploring the unique harms to children resulting from advancements in artificial intelligence, specifically, generative artificial intelligence. In that regard, UNICRI conducted a study examining how generative artificial intelligence technologies are increasingly being used to facilitate child sexual exploitation and abuse. The resulting report underscores the need for comprehensive measures, including policy interventions, technological safeguards and enhanced international cooperation. It also calls for increased public awareness and education to prevent the misuse of generative artificial intelligence, emphasizing the responsibility of various stakeholders in safeguarding children in the digital age.

67. In the area of corrections systems, UNICRI concluded research to identify current trends, effective uses and best practices in relation to integrating digital technologies in prison rehabilitation programming. The resulting report, entitled *Digital Rehabilitation in Prisons*, highlights innovative approaches that enhance prisoner reintegration while balancing technological advancements with ethical considerations and human rights. Furthermore, it introduces six guiding principles – legality, privacy and transparency, normality, equality and fairness, proportionality, and agency – to ensure the responsible use of digital rehabilitation technologies.

68. Building on the findings of the research, UNICRI conducted a comprehensive needs assessment and capacity-building activities and led the development of strategies to guide the responsible use of digital rehabilitation technologies within the criminal justice systems in Namibia and Thailand. UNICRI also provided targeted support to align local and national policies and legislation with human rights standards, ensuring ethical and effective implementation.

B. Cybercrime and cybersecurity

69. In view of the increasing prevalence of cybercrime as a global challenge, UNICRI conducted an analysis and stakeholder interviews to better understand the impact of cybercrime on access to justice in Africa, specifically exploring challenges encountered in Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Uganda. It was found that inadequate legal frameworks, limited awareness and resource constraints hinder the ability of victims to seek justice, with women disproportionately affected by online gender-based violence. That effort to engage stakeholders enabled UNICRI to establish relationships with relevant stakeholders working in the area of cyber and digital rights throughout Africa and informed the ongoing study that UNICRI has been conducting on cybercrime and access to justice in Africa.

70. In 2024, UNICRI expanded its work on the intersection of cybercrime, terrorism and violent extremism by investigating the online presence and malicious activities of violent extremists operating in often-overlooked geographical areas. In that regard, UNICRI engaged with an independent group of experts to better understand and map the exploitation of digital platforms by right- and left-wing violent extremists based in South America, Africa and Asia. The insights gathered from that engagement were complemented with open-source investigations to inform an ongoing study by UNICRI on the misuse of digital technologies by violent extremists and cyber-enabled threats to global security.

71. UNICRI undertook an in-depth investigation into the dark web and related encrypted online platforms to explore the nexus between cybercrime as a service and terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, specifically examining offensive cybercapabilities. The resulting report, entitled *Beneath the Surface: Terrorist and Violent Extremist Use of the Dark Web and Cybercrime-as-a-Service for Cyber-Attacks*, sheds light on the intricate relationship between terrorism, violent extremism and cybercrime, providing insights and analysis to inform strategies and capacity-building initiatives to counter the convergence of terrorism and cyberthreats in the "dark corners" of the Internet. It highlights the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in attributing cyber-enabled threats and underscores the need for enhanced investigative capabilities and capacity-building in that area.

72. UNICRI also convened an expert group briefing on violent extremism and video games as part of an ongoing study focused on Africa that is aimed at better understanding the exploitation of gaming platforms, as well as gaming-adjacent platforms. The briefing, entitled "New quest unlocked: the intersection of gaming and violent extremism", co-hosted by UNICRI, the permanent missions of Japan and Morocco to the United Nations in New York, and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, highlighted that the potential exploitation of those platforms remains largely overlooked and inadequately understood, despite a growing body of evidence that terrorist and violent extremist groups are leveraging gaming platforms for recruitment

and propaganda purposes, creating their own games for training purposes and gamifying high-profile terror attacks.

V. Preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization

73.   Working with local communities, civil society and national authorities, UNICRI continued to address threats related to radicalization and violent extremism, and to gain a better understanding of their impacts on societies in general and on vulnerable populations in particular. In 2024, that included in particular a focus on the effects of climate insecurity on the propaganda and recruitment efforts of violent extremist groups and on tackling the local gender dynamics of recruitment and radicalization.

A.   Gender-based discrimination and violent extremism

74.   Since 2015, UNICRI has worked to strengthen community and institutional resilience in the Sahel by collecting evidence of gendered approaches used in the propaganda of terrorist groups and the roles of women and girls in both supporting and preventing violent extremism. The evidence collected prompted the Institute to further analyse those matters with a view to mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism in the region.

75.   On the basis of findings from field research conducted in the project's first phase, as presented in the report entitled *Voices of Resilience: A Gender Needs Analysis on Preventing Violent Extremism in the Sahel*, UNICRI finalized a training manual in 2024. The manual is intended to guide the delivery of sessions aimed at strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to integrate a gender perspective into initiatives on the prevention of violent extremism. To ensure that the training material would be gender-sensitive, context-specific and relevant to the target groups, several interactive and participatory sessions were held throughout 2024.

76.   In addition, UNICRI held three-day training sessions on the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of gender and the prevention of violent extremism in Nouakchott for representatives of national authorities, civil society organizations and the media. With specific references to journalists, the training programme sought to explore the role of media in shaping public perception and fostering resilience against violent extremism, with a specific emphasis on gender-sensitive reporting.

77.   UNICRI also initiated efforts to strengthen bilateral collaboration among Member States on the women, peace and security agenda, with a focus on preventing violent extremism. That involved identifying key stakeholders, promoting dialogue, sharing good practices and developing strategic policy recommendations to improve initiatives on women, peace and security in the Sahel region.

78.   On the basis of the findings of its research, UNICRI also developed a context-specific and gender-sensitive training programme that is expected to be implemented in 2025. The programme is aimed at developing effective policies and programmes on the prevention of violent extremism in the target countries, thereby helping civil society and State institutions to better understand the impact of violent extremism on local communities and vulnerable groups. The forthcoming capacity-building phase will entail the training of relevant representatives in addressing existing grievances, local conditions and needs that could be exploited by violent extremist groups.

B.   Climate insecurity and prevention of violent extremism

79.   Throughout 2024, UNICRI expanded its efforts to address the impact of climate change on instability, conflict and security. That included examining the role of climate insecurity as a risk multiplier that exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and accentuates other underlying factors of violent extremism, such as weak governance

and inequality. In that regard, it was observed that climate change can weaken coping mechanisms, leaving populations more vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by violent extremist groups.

80. To address those interconnected vulnerabilities, UNICRI developed a methodological risk assessment tool aimed at providing national authorities in West Africa and the Sahel with a nuanced understanding of the compounded risks posed by climate change and violent extremism. The tool was designed to promote collaborative, inclusive and sustainable solutions tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the region.

81. In partnership with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, UNICRI hosted a three-day regional workshop in Dakar. The workshop was focused on developing a context-specific methodological tool that incorporated local perspectives and expertise. The development process was inclusive, involving the participation of representatives of national authorities, regional bodies, United Nations agencies, youth groups, and women's organizations and independent gender and climate experts. Special attention was given to integrating youth and gender perspectives to ensure that the tool would be inclusive and responsive to diverse populations.

82. Building on the recommendations made in the workshop, UNICRI designed a risk assessment tool specifically tailored for Mauritania. The tool was presented at a national validation workshop held in Nouakchott, during which stakeholders reviewed and endorsed the methodology used.

C. Rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders and foreign terrorist fighters

83. UNICRI concluded a study on the emerging and evolving threats posed by lone attackers, which was intended to support Member States in better understanding that phenomenon. Such attackers, without direct affiliation to violent extremist groups or clear ideological motivations, carry out high-impact violent acts. The study, conducted in collaboration with the Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, involved the analysis of specific violent attacks by lone actors, the planning and execution stages of the attacks and the potential motives and reasons behind them, with a view to formulating preventive measures. The research recognized society's crucial role in preventing violent extremism. It was emphasized that understanding the process of radicalization of lone attackers provides a basis for future interventions to prevent violent extremism that can be replicated globally.

VI. Promoting rule of law and safeguarding access to justice

84. Working with relevant justice institutions and authorities, such as the judiciary, police, security forces and corrections services, UNICRI continued to promote the rule of law, access to justice and gender equality in all its programmes as the key to enabling the development of just, equitable societies and the protection of human rights.

A. Criminal law and justice education

85. In 2024, UNICRI, in cooperation with the University for Peace, delivered the eighteenth edition of the Master of Laws in Transnational Crime and Justice programme, comprising distance-learning and residential phases at the United Nations campus in Turin, Italy. The cohort of that edition consisted of 38 students aspiring to specialize in international criminal law, humanitarian law, human rights law and transnational crime. Within the framework of the programme, the

International Criminal Law Defence Seminar was organized, in cooperation with the Office of Public Counsel for the Defence of the International Criminal Court, for the 38 students in the programme, as well as an additional 11 external participants.

86.   In October 2024, UNICRI launched the second edition of the Master of Laws in Cybercrime, Cybersecurity and International Law programme, in cooperation with the University for Peace, the Centre for Security and Crime Sciences of the University of Trento, and the University of Verona. The programme is conducted exclusively online, but includes an optional two-week workshop to be held in Turin, Italy, in July 2025. The new Master of Laws programme is aimed at providing interdisciplinary experts with the necessary skills to analyse, prevent and combat cybercrime. The cohort of the second edition comprises 37 students seeking to acquire specialized knowledge with the aim of becoming experts in cybercrime and cybersecurity, thereby contributing to two of the Institute's strategic priorities, the third (Promoting the responsible use of new and emerging technologies to address crime and exploitation) and the fifth (Promoting the rule of law and safeguarding access to justice).

87.   UNICRI also held several additional courses for postgraduate students and professionals using dynamic training methodologies. Those included four specialized courses, held either online, in person or in a hybrid format, each on one or more of the following topics: illicit trade; migration and human rights; cultural heritage, crime and security; misinformation and disinformation; and environmental crimes. Each course was organized in cooperation with different specialized entities of the United Nations system, as well as relevant research and training institutes and universities.

VII.   Supporting the Strategic Programme Framework for 2023–2026

88.   The extensive portfolio of activities of UNICRI is exclusively funded through voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors. Most voluntary contributions are short-term, earmarked, project-specific funds, except for the annual voluntary contribution from the Government of Italy, the host country of UNICRI. The successful implementation of the ambitious Strategic Programme Framework for 2023–2026 will require continued pivotal support and voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors, to whom UNICRI is grateful.