Corruption and transnational organized crime are inextricably linked worldwide. Both undermine licit economies, accountable governing, and democratic norms. They enable and reinforce one another, sustaining and expanding criminal and extremist networks. Together, they impose massive economic, political, social, and human costs and impede development goals across every aspect of human endeavor. The dynamics, causes, and impacts of corruption and organized crime are many and too often poorly understood.

Both organized criminal activity and corruption corrode the rule of law as a democratic norm and the functioning of the institutions that support it. The harms caused by corruption and organized crime are transnational, enduring, and profound. Yet, as both seek to exist and transact away from scrutiny, deliberately hidden in remote borderlands, dark corners of the worldwide web, or proudly secretive jurisdictions, they are threats too readily overlooked.

To aid the USG Justice Reform workforce to better meet these self-obscuring, mutually-reinforcing threats, the JUSTRAC+ program is organizing a Symposium Series focused on new tools, practices, and programs at the intersection of rule of law, anticorruption, and transnational organized crime. Developed by different actors using different methodologies, these emerging tools represent significant advancement of the range and depth of approaches to confront these threats.

The Symposium Series on Transnational Organized Crime, Rule of Law, and Corruption will include at least three separate events. The first event will feature work by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on its new analytical framework to disaggregate organized criminal activity. UNODC unpacks the “who” and the “what” of organized crime, dividing the concept into five dimensions: state response, enablers, OC activities, organized criminal groups (OCGs), and economic value of illicit markets of organized crime.

Part two of the Symposium Series will feature new work undertaken by the United States Agency for International Development assessing rule of law dimensions of transnational organized criminal activity. This analytical effort dives deeply into how rule of law actors and institutions engage with organized crime from the question of government complicity to the role of social norms. USAID will present its new guidance for strengthening rule of law in the face of organized criminal activity.

The third Symposium Series event centers on a new American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative toolkit to address transnational organized crime-enabled corruption. Building on practical field research over the past several years, ABA/ROLI has developed a toolkit distilling proven practices to promote action against corruption and transnational crime. ABA/ROLI will also present a new Knowledge Portal tool it has developed to support rule of law practitioners worldwide.
Summary:

For years, the fight against organized crime has been hampered by the lack of a comparable, standardized, and replicable set of indicators to measure it.

This problem is complicated by a basic definitional question that makes identifying relevant data challenging. There is no universal definition of “organized crime;” definitions that exist tend to focus on groups, failing to capture what is commonly meant by the term, either a particular type of criminal organization or a specific type of organized criminal activity.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime sought to ameliorate this complicating factor by developing a holistic, statistically grounded analysis that measured the who as well as the what of organized crime. UNODC divided organized crime into five dimensions: state response, enablers, OC activities, organized criminal groups (OCGs), and economic value. Within those five dimensions, it identified 19 important sub-dimensions, and subsequently, 364 unique indicators to contribute to measuring organized crime.

UNODC sought to test its framework and so in 2017 assessed the availability of data. Through some 140 interviews with representatives of 57 institutions in 6 countries/territories in the Western Balkans, UNODC identified which data were available and which not, but could be made available given extra time and effort (usually implicating manual extraction of the data from files, forms or registries).

In this symposium, UNODC will discuss the origins, challenges, and outcomes of its efforts. It has gathered much-needed baseline data enabling assessment of technical assistance needs, planning of future operational activities, and measurement of the success of policy interventions. UNODC anticipates this new framework test will improve the granularity of understanding of organized crime in the Balkans, as well as provide a model to other countries and regions around the world.

Date: January 28, 2021
Time: 9:00 – 10:45 AM EST
Venue: Virtual (by invitation only)
Audience: USG
AGENDA:

09:00  **Technology Check and Login**

09:15 - 09:30  **Welcoming and opening remarks**
Tobin Bradley, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Department of State
Joel Samuels, Professor of Law, University of South Carolina School of Law, and Director, Rule of Law Collaborative

09:30 - 09:40  **Presentation: International and regional efforts to assess organized crime: threat assessments, academic studies, UNODC data reports**
Angela Me, Chief, Research and Trend Analysis Branch, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Tejal Heslinger, Project Officer, Research and Trend Analysis Branch, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

10:20 - 10:30  **Remarks and Observations**
Christine Cline, Division Chief, Multilateral Section, Office of Global Programs and Policy, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Department of State

10:30 - 10:45  **Questions and Answers**

10:45  **Adjournment**