Addressing Transnational Threats: Building a Common Agenda

From 23-24 June 2014, a group of experts from East Africa, South Africa, China, India, Brazil, Turkey, and several European states took part in a seminar in The Hague on transnational threats and the post-2015 development agenda. Based on a variety of regional perspectives and areas of expertise, there was broad consensus on the need to step up global action to address these threats, including through the post-2015 framework. Two broad target options were identified for addressing priority threats in this framework:

Option 1 - two targets covering four priority issues:

- **Reduce illicit financial flows and ensure the recovery of stolen assets**
- **Reduce the flow and impact of the illicit drugs trade, the irresponsible arms trade and the trade in conflict commodities**

Option 2 - a single target covering four priority issues:

- **Prevent the illicit and irresponsible movement of people, money, drugs and arms**

Background

Globalisation has led to a proliferation of transnational threats and opportunities. Issues such as irresponsible arms transfers, drug-trafficking and illicit financial flows (IFFs) transcend national boundaries and national capacities. Multinational cooperation, collective action and shared analysis among international partners are therefore required in order to address these threats and find lasting solutions. Existing multilateral institutions and initiatives have only been partially effective in addressing transnational threats.

The formulation of a new global framework for sustainable development after the Millennium Development Goals expire in 2015 offers an opportunity to promote more holistic and inclusive responses to transnational threats. However, further analysis is required to determine which threats could be addressed through the post-2015 framework and which are better addressed through other mechanisms.

Aim and objectives

The seminar, which was organised with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aimed to **contribute to efforts to address transnational threats through the post-2015 framework** by fostering a shared understanding of transnational threats across a range of global stakeholders and by stimulating innovative thinking about how to address them.

Seminar sessions

Global perspectives on transnational threats

The aim of this session was to exchange perspectives on what is understood by the term 'transnational threat' and identify priority threats from different global perspectives. During the discussions, the participants identified **17 transnational threats** that need to be addressed. These included a range of issues, as varied as environmental stresses, piracy, human trafficking, cyber security, transnational organised crime (TOC) and IFFs.

The point that **different threats are of greater priority for different regions** of the world was emphasised by several participants. Whereas drug trafficking was identified as the major challenge in Latin America, piracy was highlighted as a key threat in the Horn of Africa. Cross-border terrorism, water and resource scarcity, as well as transnational organised crime, including drug trafficking, were identified as major threats facing the South Asian region. Broader issues such as climate change were also identified as transnational threats that have both a global and regional impact.

The **need for action at local, national, regional and global levels** was emphasised many times, bearing in mind that "the location of the greatest profit-making is not the location of the greatest violence". Although transnational threats are often felt at a local level, the cause of the threat and the responsibility for addressing it often lies elsewhere. Others pointed out that the question of responsibility is often unclear considering the complex supply chains involved. For example, drugs are produced in a relatively small number of countries, trafficked through a large number of countries and mostly sold in Europe and the United States.

Illicit financial flows were identified as one of the most important transnational threats due to their significant impact on governance and conflict, alongside their major role in facilitating other transnational crimes such as the drugs trade. It was observed that "Illicit financial flows are the glue that hold all transnational crimes together".

A key issue discussed was the role and capacity of the **state.** It was stressed that transnational threats often are analysed without sufficient attention to **state legitimacy**. In many affected states, criminal groups are often embedded in the societies in which they operate and enjoy legitimacy at the local level. State fragility and the inability to regain state authority in territories controlled by criminal groups provide fertile ground for transnational threats to take root. The links between weak states and transnational threats highlighted the need to address governance issues in the post-2015 framework. Some states also link transnational threats to their own national security agendas or view them as threats to their own state security. It was clear from the discussion that it is important not only to focus on the threats but also on the contexts from which they emerge.

Several participants cited the **nexus between politics and transnational threats** as a central obstacle to combating transnational threats, such as

organised crime. The example was given of Myanmar where in the past both the government and ethnic armed groups reportedly profited from the drug trade, and of Colombia where businessmen and local political elites had an interest in maintaining conflict due to economic incentives. According to some participants, **political interests are often involved in defining threats**. One example mentioned was the use of the word 'terrorist' when labelling certain groups in society, some of whom might have legitimate grievances as a result of social exclusion, illustrated by the quotation "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter is another man's transnational organised criminal". This highlights the need to understand these threats not in purely technical terms, but in light of issues of social, political and economic exclusion.

Looking forward, the need to focus more attention on **new technologies** was emphasised as they will become more important to the impact of transnational threats in the future. New technologies are not only threats themselves – as seen in the increasing number of cyber-attacks globally – but they are also used to facilitate other transnational threats. For example, criminals are increasingly using the Internet to facilitate transnational crimes. The "online migration of old forms of criminality, for example, criminal cartels in Latin America broadcasting their fire-power on Facebook" exemplifies this trend.

Multilateral responses to transnational threats

This session focused on the **strengths and weaknesses of multilateral responses** to IFFs, TOC and the arms trade.

Capacity building at the national level, such as ensuring an effective tax system and improving investigatory capabilities, was described as a key measure to address IFFs. Principal challenges to combating TOC include the diverse, innovative approaches used by criminals such as criminal cartels in Brazil reportedly using drones to drop mobile phones into prisons. Other key issues mentioned were weak state institutions and the lack of data in many countries. However, the progress in data collection that is being made in Africa was also highlighted as a positive development.

When talking about **TOC**, the common perception of developing countries as exporters and developed countries as consumers was challenged by an emphasis on the complex nature of supply and demand chains. A number of international efforts to combat organised crime were referred to, including the development of law enforcement networks and

national capacity building. Some participants raised concerns that law enforcement and prosecution might have unintended consequences such as increased levels of violence. The **complex relationship between TOC, development and violence** was pointed out. For example, increases in development do not inevitably lead to a reduction of TOC: instead, TOC evolves alongside development. Further, increased levels of TOC are not always linked to increases in violence. For example, several countries in Latin America have all faced relatively similar increases in TOC but very different levels of violence as a consequence.

Several participants emphasised that the **arms trade** should not be treated as yet another illicit market since the proliferation of arms often stems from the legal market. Thus, more attention needs to be paid to irresponsible trade by states: many states produce weapons that are used in conflicts and some states also provide insurgent groups with weapons in different conflicts. One participant stressed that in order to combat the arms trade, the capacity of agencies responsible for gun control need to be strengthened. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was identified as an important framework that can be used to combat the irresponsible arms trade. However, one participant questioned whether the political will to implement the treaty exists.

Trends in global governance and challenges for multilateral cooperation

The aim of this session was to **identify relevant trends in global governance** and the implications and opportunities for addressing transnational threats.

One key trend identified by several participants was the **increasing diversification and fragmentation of the international system.** Implications include a decline in multilateralism in favour of regionalism, the challenge of establishing legitimacy in a multi-stakeholder system and the growing role of emerging powers such as the BRICS grouping. One participant stressed that the North-South divide still exists despite these changes and that emerging countries from the Global South have yet to push fundamentally alternative visions of global governance.

Another trend identified was **the greater role played by non-state actors** such as civil society organisations (CSOs), municipalities and the middle-class in the international system. Several participants emphasised that these CSOs can play an important role in global governance, for instance by filling policy and compliance gaps in multilateral initiatives, or

through pushing businesses to contribute to global public goods. One participant stressed that, while it is encouraging that non-state actors engage on global governance issues, they need to recognise that many states still place a strong emphasis on state sovereignty.

Given these changing dynamics, it was argued that rather than the world becoming multipolar, it is transforming into a **diversified 'non-polar' world**. As a result, the ability to deal with global public bads and provide global public goods is becoming increasingly complex.

It was stressed that while **globalisation** has slowed, it is still growing at a faster pace than in past periods of history. However, repeated financial crises, increases in the number of refugees, challenges to state authority and the weakness of multilateral institutions were highlighted as **risks to the current global system**. This fragility is especially problematic given that increasingly urban and middle class populations rely heavily on the functioning of this global system. With development, trade and climate change talks all on the horizon, **2015 was highlighted as a year in which multilateralism will be tested**. The risks of overburdening global governance structures were emphasised.

Views were also exchanged **on the implications of these trends for the post-2015 framework**. According to one participant, the inclusivity of conversations between governments at the UN in New York have contributed to making the post-2015 process more legitimate. Yet several challenges were mentioned during the session including the lack of global consensus on issues such as the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), the reluctance of some emerging powers and developing countries to include a focus on peace and governance, especially given concerns that this could infringe on state sovereignty. In response to this last point, the voluntary, non-binding nature of the post-2015 framework and the continued primacy of national planning processes and decisions were emphasised.

Addressing transnational threats in the post-2015 framework

The aim of this session was to share information about the latest post-2015 developments and the scope of the framework to address transnational threats.

The post-2015 policy debate was described as a once in a generation chance to ensure that all development efforts are compatible with and contribute to peace.

For an issue to be included at **goal level** in the post-2015 framework, it was argued that it would need to be agreed as one of the top 8-12 global development challenges, whereas to be taken up at the **target level**, an issue would need to rank among the world's top 50 development priorities. Although targets on transnational threats have been included in several inputs to the post-2015 process, including the Open Working Group's (OWG) initial drafts of the new framework currently under discussion, more discussion is needed in order to strengthen consensus and commitment among member states, to agree on specific target inclusion and to clarify how they will be measured.

It was argued that **priority issues for post-2015 need to be framed as policy options.** Some criteria mentioned were the need to use language that is compelling to the public and the development community, to formulate outcome-oriented targets that are universal, measurable and do not engender harmful side effects. It was suggested that progress could best be measured not with single indicators but rather by using **'baskets' of indicators** to provide a balanced picture of progress. Baskets of indicators could be used to measure different aspects of progress: *capacity* to make progress, the '*objective*' situation, and *public perceptions* about whether progress is being made.

Outcome of working group sessions

The aim of the working group sessions was to identify threats which could be addressed through the post-2015 development framework, and to comment on target and indicator options.

The participants were divided into groups to discuss the following questions: (1) Which transnational threats should be prioritised and why? (2) Which of the priority issues can be addressed in the post-2015 framework and why? What targets and indicators could be used? (3) What other processes, institutions and initiatives could be used to address those threats that should not be addressed through the post-2015 framework?

Synthesis of key discussion points

- The reduction of IFFs could be formulated as a standalone target in the post-2015 framework due to its significant impact on conflict.

- Other critical transnational threats to specifically prioritise for attention included transnational organised crime, the illegal drugs trade, human trafficking, the illicit and/or irresponsible arms trade and the trade in conflict commodities. It was argued that most of these issues could be formulated into a single target in the post-2015 framework.

- Other important threats to address in the post-2015 framework are climate change and water scarcity due to their negative impact on conflict and development. However, these threats should be addressed elsewhere in the framework rather than in targets on transnational threats.

- Caution is needed when wording targets and indicators in order to avoid unintended side effects such as distorting impacts or ill-adapted or non-contextualised indicators.

- Rather than seeking to create new initiatives from scratch, it will be important to use the framework to catalyse support for existing multilateral agreements and processes that can effectively help address transnational threats, such as the Kimberley process, the Extractive Industries Initiative, the ATT and the Financial Action Task Force.

- The complexity of supply chains need to be taken into account when formulating targets. Targets to reduce transnational threats, for instance, IFFs, make it difficult to measure progress and ensure accountability due to the many actors involved at both the local, national and global level.

- Organised criminal groups are highly innovative and entrepreneurial organisations with the ability to spot gaps in the system. They will quickly shift to new areas if existing ones are prioritised by the international community. "Transnational organised crime is rarely truly eradicated" one participant stressed, "but displaced to less-governed spaces – such as opium production from Thailand to Myanmar."

- Terrorism and violent extremism are key transnational threats to address but they may be difficult to address in the post-2015 framework due to their multifarious causes and contested nature.

- Other issues such as national security policies, the war on terror, UN Security Council reform and cyber security were identified as critical issues that need global attention but would be difficult to address within the framework.

Potential language for targets on transnational threats in the post-2015 framework

Option 1 - two targets covering four priority issues:

- *Reduce illicit financial flows and ensure the recovery of stolen assets*
- *Reduce the flow and impact of the illicit drugs trade, the irresponsible arms trade and the trade in conflict commodities*

Option 2 - a single target covering four priority issues:

- *Prevent the illicit and irresponsible movement of people, money, drugs and arms*

Conclusions

Despite the ambitious agenda, all participants engaged actively with the process and in the debates. The seminar presented a valuable opportunity for the exchange of ideas amongst experts from different regions with different backgrounds and areas of expertise. In this regard, it served as a valuable learning experience for participants, while deepening Saferworld's analysis and understanding of transnational threats and their impacts.

There was agreement to some extent with Saferworld's analysis about which transnational threats can be effectively addressed in the post-2015 framework. However, there were also several important qualifications, for instance the emphasis on regional differences such as the centrality of piracy in the Horn of Africa and drug-trafficking in Latin America. In addition, cyber security was identified by

several participants as a key issue which will become increasingly important in the future.

Next steps

- Based on the deeper analysis and understanding resulting from this seminar, Saferworld will continue to advocate for key transnational threats to be addressed in the post-2015 framework.

- Saferworld will keep the participant group updated on the post-2015 process, including on key outcomes, such as the final report of the OWG. Saferworld will also share selected analysis on transnational threats and the post-2015 framework, both by Saferworld and other organisations, in order to stimulate further discussion, understanding and action on these issues. We encourage participants likewise to share relevant materials with the rest of the group.

- Saferworld will inform the group about related steps in its on-going policy dialogue on peace and the post-2015 process. These include a conference in Delhi in July, two events in New York in September, and a conference in Istanbul in December. There will likely be opportunities for participants in the Hague seminar to take part in these events.

- Saferworld is open to collaborating with and providing support to participants who are keen to engage further on the inclusion of transnational threats within the post-2015 framework through their own organisations and/or networks.

The seminar entitled 'Addressing Transnational Threats: Building a Common Agenda' was held in The Hague from 23-24 June 2014. The one and-a-half day expert seminar was organised by Saferworld with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was attended by 25 experts from think-tanks, inter-governmental organisations, NGOs and policy institutions from different regions including China, India, Brazil, and Turkey as well as African and European countries.

Annex: List of Participants

Mr. Bruno Langeani	Criminal Justice and Public Safety Coordinator Instituto Sou da Paz
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Dr. Arun Sahgal	Director The Forum for Strategic Initiative
Ms. Cheryl Frank	Division Head Transnational Threats and International Crime Division (TTIC), Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
Dr. Mehmet Arda	Professor Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM)
Mr. David Steven	Senior Fellow and Associate Director Center on International Cooperation (CIC)
Ms. Catarina Tully	Board Member Academics Stand Against Poverty
Dr. Saif El Din Daoud Abd El Rhman	Regional Capacity Development Coordinator Drought Resilience Initiative for Horn of Africa, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
Ms. Vanessa Wyeth	Peace and Conflict Advisor Global Partnerships and Policy Division, Development Co-operation Directorate - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DCD)
Mr. Max Middeke	Project Manager The Africa Peace and Security Programme, African Union / Institute for Peace and Security Studies
Dr. Claudia Seymour	Researcher Small Arms Survey (SAS)
Mr. Tofik Murshudlu	Chief Organized Crime and Illicit Trafficking Branch, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Ms. Monique Bouman	Senior Policy Advisor Humanitarian Aid & Reconstruction at Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ms. Dorothée Riepma	Humanitarian Aid & Reconstruction at Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict. We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and Europe.