UNICRI

Strategic Programme
Framework 2023 – 2026

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United Nations
Interregional Crime and Justice
Research Institute

UNICRI

Strategic Programme Framework 2023 – 2026

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Foreword

Just as the world was beginning to emerge from the human and economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022 brought a new set of threats and challenges to global security, justice, and peace arising from international tensions, conflicts, and violence. For millions of people, these complex and multifaceted threats have added to the range of factors that exacerbate the already profound and multi-dimensional impacts they experience due to climate change, displacement, and deepening inequality.

Over the coming years, many will continue to face a precarious and uncertain future as these threats converge with new and prevailing challenges related not only to justice and security but also to the transnational crime[1] threats that thrive in these contexts. This is a changing landscape that calls for new ways of understanding, preventing, and responding to crime and justice problems.

For more than 50 years, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) has worked closely with Member States and stakeholders globally to implement research and capacity-building programmes and projects in both traditional and emerging areas of justice, crime prevention, and the rule of law. In accordance with our mandate, we work with a substantive focus on transnational crime and justice in its many evolving dimensions, using an approach anchored in action-oriented research. This combination of our substantive expertise and our specialized approach is the basis of UNICRI's comparative advantage in the UN system.

Following our inaugural 2019 – 2022 Strategic Programme Framework and its successful implementation and outcomes,[2] UNICRI is now embarking on a new framework for the next four years. Our Strategic Programme Framework 2023 – 2026 translates our vision and mandate into a compelling and practical set of priorities. It is future-facing and grounded in present-day experience and context.

The five priority areas, taken together with UNICRI's integrated and tailored approaches, ensure the Institute's work remains valued, responsive, relevant, and aligned to the needs of Member States and the broader international community. It is a framework of priorities that supports achievement of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), with particular focus on Goal 16, which comprises the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and the building of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. It also aligns UNICRI's work to the Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda and its perspective of security and rule of law as critical elements for sustainable development across the world.

This Strategic Programme Framework is the result of extensive consultation with our many partners and stakeholders around the world, including 49 Member States. I am immensely grateful to them, as well as our staff and Board of Trustees. Together, we have positioned UNICRI to continue to make an important impact on justice, security, and the rule of law in the years to come.
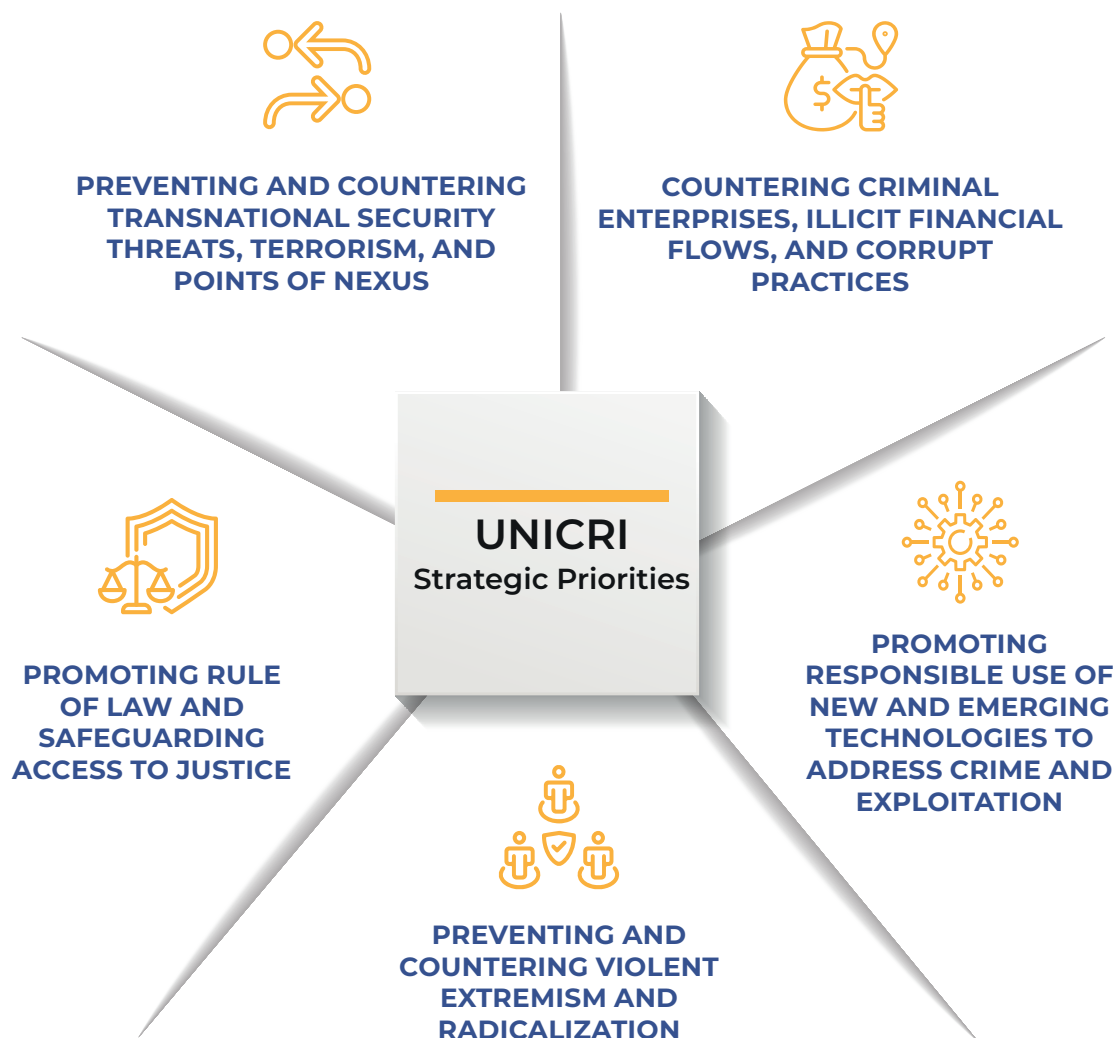
February 2023

Antonia Marie De Meo,
Director of UNICRI

Executive Summary

This Strategic Programme Framework sets out the strategic priority areas that will guide UNICRI's work from 2023 to 2026.

PREVENTING AND COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL SECURITY THREATS, TERRORISM, AND POINTS OF NEXUS

COUNTERING CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES, ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS, AND CORRUPT PRACTICES

UNICRI Strategic Priorities

PROMOTING RULE OF LAW AND SAFEGUARDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE USE OF NEW AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES TO ADDRESS CRIME AND EXPLOITATION

PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION

These priority areas reflect - and respond to - trends, risks, and opportunities predicted to unfold over the coming four years: those that have the potential in scope or scale to substantially impact the transnational crime, security, and justice landscape.

This strategic framework also sets out the programming toolkit of approaches, methodologies, and processes that UNICRI will draw upon to realise its strategic agenda. It is the dynamic synergy between its strategic priorities, tactical approaches, and core principles which gives UNICRI its unique comparative advantage and ensures its work is innovative, targeted, and outcome-focused.

Against this backdrop, UNICRI's mandate remains critical, and it will continue to guide UNICRI's focus and priorities. This includes supporting Member States in their responsibilities and compliance with UN conventions, including those relating to combatting corruption, organized crime, trafficking, and terrorism.[3]

Working through partnerships will be essential to the success of UNICRI's Strategic Programme Framework 2023 – 2026. Building complementary, harmonized, and integrated solutions will be important to respond to the complex and interconnected challenges of our times. UNICRI will work across the UN, with Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector, and academia so that its work is inclusive and effective, embracing the SDG challenge to leave no one behind.

This framework should be seen as a living document. Like UNICRI, it operates in a landscape of compounding global pressures and evolving geopolitical, economic, environmental, social, and technological shifts. It has been designed to be iterative and adaptable to the latest research insights, horizon scans, and emerging trends and crises.

The Strategic Programme Framework's core, however, is firmly anchored in UNICRI's mandate and the SDGs related to peace, justice, and strong institutions. More than vital ends unto themselves, these goals and the collective actions that underpin them will be imperative to realising the entire UN's vision of future global goals for the enjoyment of human rights, gender equality, and economic and social justice.

UNICRI was established in 1968 pursuant to Economic and Social Council Resolution 1086 B (XXXIX) of 1965. **"**

About UNICRI

UNICRI is one of the six autonomous UN research and training institutes and the only one focused on criminal justice and crime prevention. Established in 1968, its Statute sets a broad mandate in the fields of justice, crime prevention, and rule of law. This includes formulating research on emerging threats, developing policies on crime prevention, and implementing programmes in specialized fields of crime, justice, and security.

UNICRI offers expertise in crime and justice to Member States, civil society, international and academic institutions, as well as other relevant stakeholders. This expertise is offered through a comprehensive set of technical tools and tailored approaches, including action-oriented research, policy guidance, professional and academic training, as well as capacity-building programmes adapted to regional, national, and local contexts. UNICRI can initiate research and - in partnership with Member States and other organizations - use these findings to design technical interventions, formulate policies, and implement programmes to respond to key threats as they arise.

As a UN entity, the Institute enjoys a global platform and authority to develop, test, and pilot new and innovative approaches and tools in criminal justice and crime prevention. UNICRI offers the UN and its Member States opportunities to partner and convene intergovernmental, governmental, and non-governmental organizations on action-oriented research, policy formulation, and capacity-building or technical programmes.

Italy has generously hosted UNICRI since its establishment. With headquarters in Turin since May 2000, UNICRI maintains small liaison offices in Rome and New York, as well as project offices in Brussels, Geneva, and The Hague. As part of the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative, it also has project staff positions in Algiers, Abu Dhabi, Amman, Manila, Nairobi, Rabat, Tashkent, and Tbilisi.

UNICRI is an exclusively voluntary funded UN entity that relies upon voluntary contributions for all its activities. It is governed by a Board of Trustees, comprised of seven appointed members and four *ex officio* members.

UNICRI reports annually to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) through the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). It also provides oral reports directly to ECOSOC every second year.[4]

Global Transnational Crime Landscape

The transnational crime landscape is rapidly and irrevocably changing. Criminal networks, alliances, and economies are adapting in sophisticated and expedient ways to expand their reach, influence, profit, and impact. Previously distinct threats are converging into new opportunities for multi-criminality and criminal exploitation. In a dynamic landscape of compounding vulnerabilities, new security threats are interacting with current crises and prevailing challenges in uncertain and devastating ways.

UNICRI has undertaken an analysis of this landscape and key transnational crime and justice threats as they relate to UNICRI's mandate. It has organised these complex and interrelated issues around key themes[5] as follows:

RISING INSECURITY AND TERRORISM

Transnational crimes related to terrorism, violent extremism, CBRN security, and attacks on critical infrastructure pose significant and salient threats to global security, territorial integrity, and peace. They undermine state stability, generate new threats, or exacerbate previous ones, and drive escalatory insecurity.

These crimes also typically operate as part of a dynamic interplay where actors, tactics, *modus operandi*, and finance flows converge. As seen by the confluence between transnational organized crime[6] and terrorism, nexus points provide numerous and diverse opportunities for criminal actors to expand the scope and scale of their illicit activities and income.[7]

Access and availability of new and emerging technologies have further added to this complex and evolving threat landscape by introducing distinct security and governance risks. Social media has enabled terrorist narratives, recruitment, and funding. Cyberattacks threaten to disable critical industries and infrastructure that operate on digitized systems.[8] In the case of biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear related facilities, the consequences of attacks could also lead to emergencies, disasters, or volatile materials being trafficked or weaponized.[9]

Conflict zones and crises create fertile sites for cross-border criminality and lawlessness, which in turn fuel regional instability and insecurity. This may arise through heightened criminal opportunities, wider or more nuanced security risks, as well as changes in the scale or intensity of transnational crimes and their impacts. This may include the proliferation and trafficking of weapons, the rise of criminal insurgency, as well as drug and people trafficking.[10]

REACH OF ORGANIZED CRIME

Criminal enterprises are motivated by profit. Human trafficking, arms smuggling, as well as counterfeit trading, drug trafficking, and precious metals trafficking[11] are some of the many criminal activities that contribute to illicit financial flows,[12] both within countries and across borders.

Opportunistic and adaptive to change, organized criminals and their networks can be quick to exploit new possibilities and alliances for criminal enterprise, financial gain, and profiteering. Increasingly, this includes the acquisition of businesses and the use of vectors in the legal economy.[13] These pathways for illegal activities provide organized criminals with the means to embed corrupt and illicit commercial practices into state structures, undermining public trust in rule of law and weakening institutional resilience.[14]

In addition to the well-known traditional activities of organized criminal networks, the criminal phenomenon of online trade in illicit goods and services is a highly dynamic and substantial criminal market itself.[15] Online drug trafficking and the trade of counterfeit goods such as pharmaceuticals are attractive opportunities in cyberspace where both buyers and sellers are anonymous.[16]

New crime-as-a-service models[17] are also emerging from criminal entrepreneurs offering criminal knowledge and tools for sale or rent, typically in the domain of cybercrimes. These online activities do more than facilitate the flow of illicit funds globally; they also impact socio-economic development by draining and diverting trillions of dollars and public resources away from community needs.

ROLE OF NEW AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

The role of new and emerging technologies as disruptors, enablers, and tools of crime is transforming the criminal justice landscape. Criminals can access new capabilities that optimize their methods for tracking, profiling, and accessing targets and victims.[18] An extensive spectrum of cybercrimes has also been incorporated into criminal domains of attack. In addition, web platforms, virtual spaces, and social media have revolutionized how we experience crime and victimization.

New and emerging technologies have also encouraged innovations in crime prevention, detection, and control. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools and big data analytics can be applied to detect and combat crimes related to illicit financial flows, online child sexual exploitation,[19] and counterfeit goods. Facial recognition technology has also been adapted to support law enforcement investigations for identification and authentication.[20]

This rapid uptake of technology is not without threats to public safety, human rights, and digital inclusivity. It also has significant implications for population groups, for example ethnic minorities, women, and children, who may find themselves increasingly vulnerable to technology tools related to surveillance and data collection.[21]

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND EXPLOITATION

Vulnerability to threats varies across different population groups, contexts, and times. Situations of economic insecurity and restricted movement increase vulnerability to violence, especially for women.[22] In conflict zones, women are at particular risk for trafficking, sexual violence,[23] and exploitation.[24]

Fragile contexts can amplify these vulnerabilities to criminality, both for those who are its targets and its agents of crime. This is because criminal activities are enabled through weak criminal justice systems, inadequate security governance, and fragmented regulatory structures.[25] Maintaining security, restoring peace, and protecting livelihoods and economic opportunities remain major challenges in these contexts of unresolved instability, conflict, and violence. This is particularly the case for refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, irregular migrants, as well as people trapped in cycles of poverty, injustice, or incarceration.

The push and pull factors that expose people and communities to criminality, also attract violent extremist recruiters and create vulnerabilities for radicalization. Complex dynamic factors can include structural social, political, or economic variables, local context issues, and community grievances. Examples include lack of education and income-generating opportunities as well as insecurity caused by violence and conflict.[26]

Relationships between climate insecurity, competition for natural resources, and regional resilience against violent extremism demonstrate how opportunities for criminality can coevolve with social and environmental vulnerabilities. Youth[27] are particularly susceptible to radicalization and violent extremism in fragile contexts, given their risk of experiencing loss of livelihoods, marginalization, and discrimination, as our research in the Sahel region has shown.[28]

Strategic Programme Priorities

UNICRI will pursue five strategic priorities to advance its mandated objectives of crime prevention and criminal justice in support of global peace, security, and human rights. These strategic priorities respond to key threats identified through extensive consultation, analysis, research, and contextual scanning. They reflect a holistic approach to addressing endemic threats and an intersectional model for strategic research and interventions.

For this reason, UNICRI's priorities in the Strategic Programme Framework 2023 – 2026 are deliberately broad and inclusive. They support the UN Common Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for SDGs, with a particular focus on SDG 16 related to peace, justice, and strong institutions. These priorities also recognize the critical importance of gender, climate change, and youth as cross-cutting considerations.

UNICRI's five strategic priorities are:

- Preventing and Countering Transnational Security Threats, Terrorism, and Points of Nexus

- Countering Criminal Enterprises, Illicit Financial Flows, and Corrupt Practices

- Promoting Responsible Use of New and Emerging Technologies to Address Crime and Exploitation

- Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization

- Promoting Rule of Law and Safeguarding Access to Justice

Responding to global security and justice threats is critical to UNICRI's mandate to prevent and combat transnational crime. Strategies to tackle cross-border crime threats and risks, including their growing volume and severity, rely on stability, security, and peace. Erosions in political and economic security and social stability have the potential to act as catalysts for new nexus threats, borne from convergences of conflict, crises, and criminal opportunities.

As part of its strategy to combat transnational security threats and the multiple fronts in which they operate, UNICRI will focus on:

- ⊙ **Protection of public institutions, infrastructure, and soft targets[29]**
- ⊙ **Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear safety and security**
- ⊙ **Crime and security implications of complex global crises**
- ⊙ **Nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism**

UNICRI will work with governments, security, and law enforcement agencies across key niche areas and nexus points to develop and implement innovative programmes and practices that combat transnational security threats. This includes the nexus between organized crime and terrorism and the confluence of criminal and terrorist actors, tactics, and resources. UNICRI will look at rapidly emerging crisis events with global reach, and the implications for new paradigms of risk and criminal opportunities, such as trafficking and CBRN threats in conflict zones. The increasing use of soft targets and critical infrastructure as sites for attack, including from cyber threats, will also remain a point of significant focus.

UNICRI will continue to address and mitigate the prevailing and pressing risks of CBRN safety and security, including cyberbio risks, CBRN financing proliferation, and CBRN disinformation. As a signatory to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, and a co-chair of one of its working groups, UNICRI will also continue its role across the UN system to support Member States to prevent and counter terrorism, through its technical role in translating good practices of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism framework into national policies and action plans.

Preventing and Countering Transnational Security Threats, Terrorism, and Points of Nexus

KEY PARTNERS:

GOVERNMENT

SECURITY

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Countering Criminal Enterprises, Illicit Financial Flows, and Corrupt Practices

Endemic criminal activities and their proceeds are associated with contemporary global threats that undermine public trust in the rule of law, weaken institutional resilience,[30] and corrupt justice systems. Criminal financial enterprises and illicit financial flows divert vital funds away from social, health, and other development needs. Profits can also be reinvested to support terrorism and other criminal activities. This has particularly adverse consequences for the most vulnerable in society.

UNICRI has identified key areas of focus in its work to combat criminal enterprises, illicit financial flows, and corrupt practices. These include:

- **Transnational organized crime networks and online criminal markets**
- **Illicit finance and the global criminal economy**
- **Stolen public and cultural asset recovery and repatriation**
- **Counterfeiting, fraudulent goods, and supply chain integrity**

UNICRI will work with governments, justice departments, legal institutions, and prosecuting authorities to target incentives for involvement in criminal financial enterprises, illicit financial flows, counterfeit trade, and corrupt practices. It will support Member States in the investigation and prosecution of economic crimes, including bolstering parallel financial investigations and more effective modalities for the seizure and confiscation of illicitly acquired assets, which may also include cultural artefacts.

UNICRI will also provide expert advice and support Member State efforts to counter corrupt practices, including those related to intellectual property protection, counterfeiting, and insulating food and health care supply chains from organized crime infiltration. UNICRI will continue to advise Member States on policies and mechanisms to channel recovered assets into high-priority development needs and tackle the financial and economic impacts of organised crime and corruption.
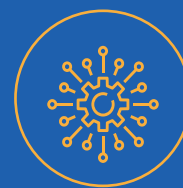
New and emerging technologies play a pivotal role in preventing and combatting transnational crime and global security threats. They can support the identification and regulation of transnational criminal activity and networks as well as promote practices for a sustainable and inclusive future. However, new and emerging technologies can also be used as tools for malicious purposes, such as for crime and violence, as well as enablers of threats against peace, justice, and security.

UNICRI will work in key criminal justice areas related to the risks and opportunities presented by emerging and new technologies. These areas are evolving and dynamic, and therefore are presented as broad in scope and designed to be adaptive to contextual factors and opportunities. The areas that UNICRI will work in will include, but not be limited to:

- **New and emerging technologies in law enforcement**
- **Governance and frameworks of artificial intelligence**
- **Cybercrime and the use of new and emerging technologies for criminal purposes**
- **Digital cooperation, digital inclusivity, and the digital divide**

UNICRI will work with national authorities, law enforcement agencies, the public-private sector, and civil society actors to harness the opportunities of new and emerging technologies related to justice, as well as to advance understanding of their potential risks to justice, including how their use may impact human rights. UNICRI will work with law enforcement agencies to promote the responsible use of new and emerging technologies, including toolkits and policy frameworks for the responsible use of AI, such as facial recognition technology. It will continue its proven work across a network of collaborators in civil society and public-private sectors to raise awareness on how technology can monitor human rights abuses and target transnational criminal activity, such as identifying those involved in online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

With its focus on justice, UNICRI will also continue to support the UN Common Agenda's goals to enhance global collaboration to address the societal, ethical, legal, and economic impacts of digital technologies to maximize benefits and minimize harm to society.[31,32] This includes UNICRI's Future Series Webinars, which promote research, knowledge sharing, and dissemination related to new and emerging technologies such as Web 3.0, metaverse, and augmented reality.

Promoting Responsible Use of New and Emerging Technologies to Address Crime and Exploitation

KEY PARTNERS:

NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

LAW ENFORCEMENT

PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTOR

CIVIL SOCIETY

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization

Strong governance, accountable institutions, and inclusive societies are indispensable foundations for peaceful and sustainable development. In their absence existing grievances, local conditions, and situational circumstances can be easily exploited by violent extremist groups. These factors may expose people and communities to criminality, create vulnerabilities for radicalization, and give rise to violence.

UNICRI will work to strengthen community and institutional resilience to protect individuals and vulnerable populations, build social cohesion, and develop effective strategies for preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism. In so doing, the key areas for UNICRI will include:

- **Radicalization and violent extremism drivers for youth**
- **Gender-based discrimination and violent extremism**
- **Rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders and foreign terrorist fighters**
- **Role of sports in preventing violent extremism**

UNICRI will work with local communities, civil society, and state institutions to address threats related to radicalization and violent extremism as well as to understand their impacts on societies in general and on vulnerable groups in particular. It will work through partnerships at the community level to tackle the local drivers for the radicalization of youth as well as gender dynamics of recruitment and radicalization. It will also work in settings where conditions expose people to the risks of radicalization and recruitment, such as prisons.

UNICRI will continue its programmes aimed at preventing radicalization by strengthening the protective factors for individuals and groups. This includes the Institute's work on the linkages between sport and the prevention of violent extremism.[33]

Promoting the rule of law, access to justice, and gender equality are key to enabling the development of just, equitable societies and the protection of human rights, both in conflict and in peace. Addressing challenges to the rule of law and providing access to justice for all is not only fundamental to tackling crime and building security, it also ensures institutional and individual protections of people's rights, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalized.

UNICRI will work to strengthen access to fair criminal justice administration systems and institutional accountability to advance equitable and accountable justice. Population groups who experience multiple risk factors, such as marginalisation, lack of access to resources, and gender violence,[34] will be core beneficiaries. The key areas of UNICRI's work will include:

- ➡ **Women and access to justice systems**
- ➡ **Vulnerable populations in fragile, conflict, and climate insecure areas**
- ➡ **Criminal law and justice education**

UNICRI will work through Member States and partners to strengthen and reform judicial, legal, and security systems as they relate to women and girls' access to justice and gender equality. This recognizes the impact of the justice gap[35] on the lives and rights of women and girls and provides further momentum to the vision of the Agenda 2030 on justice for women.

The Institute will continue its work with relevant justice institutions and authorities, such as the judiciary, police, security forces, and corrections, on the tools, policy, and legal mechanisms that support strong, fair, and accountable justice systems. Given the susceptibility of certain individuals and population groups to victimization and exploitation in fragile and conflict-prone zones, UNICRI will continue its justice work in these contexts, advising Member States on how to better protect at-risk groups.

The aggravating impacts of climate change on instability, conflict, and security will also remain at the forefront of UNICRI's work. This includes the role of climate insecurity as a threat multiplier capable of exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and producing distinctive and increased risks related to transnational crime and human rights.[36]

Promoting Rule of Law and Safeguarding Access to Justice

KEY PARTNERS:

MEMBER STATES

LAW ENFORCEMENT

STATE INSTITUTIONS

Approach

Staying true to its substantive mandate, UNICRI works at local, regional, and global levels to deliver research, technical assistance, training, and capacity-building support. Its approach is designed to be innovative, dynamic, and targeted – tailored to niche areas and adaptive to changing contexts. This ensures the Institute's work remains agile and responsive to the needs of Member States and the international community. It also positions UNICRI as a partner of choice for intergovernmental and governmental institutions, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and UN entities working in complex and sensitive emerging areas of crime, justice, and security.

As a research and training institute, UNICRI offers an integrative programmatic framework that provides a coherent research-to-practice continuum of analysis, field evidence and data, learning, best practices, programme design and implementation, and evaluation. It is an approach that builds upon a strong evidence base for current programming, critical to effective and efficient development outcomes. It also enables UNICRI to draw on its rich research and data insights for foresight analysis and horizon scanning for emerging forms of crime.

UNICRI Principles

UN principles

As part of the UN system, UNICRI subscribes to the UN's programming principles, including consideration of human rights, gender equality, sustainability, resilience, and accountability, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda and grounded in the UN Charter and international treaties and norms. As relevant, it further applies the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

In line with the United Nation's vision of the centrality of the rule of law,[37] UNICRI also recognizes that the rule of law is both elemental to its mandate and indispensable for upholding respect for human rights, peace, and security, as well as sustainable development goals. Consequently, the Institute integrates rule of law principles throughout its programmes and activities.

Partnerships, networks, and collaborations

Common action is a strategic necessity for tackling the complex issues of transnational crime and justice. UNICRI collaborates through partnerships and global networks to realize the goals of its programmes and broader mandate. The Institute's diverse alliances and trusted partnerships with UN entities, stakeholders, and those it serves are critical to achieving its goals.

Designed for durable solutions

While its expertise allows adaptive and responsive approaches and interventions, UNICRI recognizes that the dimensions of transnational crime and justice have longevity and are endemic. As such, UNICRI applies approaches and practices that support sustainable and durable results that are long-term in vision.

Continuous learning through testing

The Institute's research is action-oriented and based on contextual evidence and data. It moves from research to practice using a continuous learning and testing framework that is iterative and applies adaptive tools for knowledge production and learning transfer.

UNICRI Tools

UNICRI employs a wide range of tools to address specialized niches and selected fields of crime prevention, justice, and security. These tools are tailored to the local context and informed by research, in-field evidence and data, and specialized technical expertise.

Action-oriented research combines research and practical work in a process that informs technical programmes, practices, and knowledge products. Working in partnerships and through collaboration, UNICRI's research approach ensures that its response to complex and challenging criminal justice issues is adaptive and grounded in evidence and local context. Research activities range from the collection and analysis of primary data on the features, magnitude, and actors of criminal phenomena, to comparisons of legislation and jurisprudence, and assessments of processes and contexts within which laws and policies are enacted. UNICRI also runs pilot projects and simulations to assess, analyze, and test new and innovative approaches and ways of working.

Knowledge transfer and dissemination of good practices and lessons learned from UNICRI's programmes and activities are shared with the international community and serve as a global resource. UNICRI enhances learning and raises awareness in the field of crime and justice by organizing and hosting international conferences, webinars, and specialized courses for practitioners. UNICRI also publishes research papers, reports, technical manuals, guidebooks, and programme evaluations, as well as the *Freedom From Fear (F3)* periodical magazine.

Education and training activities are designed to build knowledge and awareness on foundational topics such as human rights standards and law, transnational crime and justice, and international humanitarian law, as well as specialized topics. Through a well-developed in-house capacity, UNICRI designs and delivers degree and non-degree based professional and academic learning activities. UNICRI's flagship programme, in partnership with UPEACE, is the annual Master of Laws (LL.M.) in Transnational Crime and Justice. The Institute also runs regular short postgraduate education courses on a range of topics within UNICRI's substantive mandate.

Capacity-building delivered by UNICRI provides sustainable and tailored support to Member States, partners, and communities to strengthen institutions and civil society. Drawing from an interdisciplinary network of experts and partners, the Institute delivers a range of capacity-building activities, including both rapid training to address urgent needs and longer-term support to build resilience and sustainable competence.

Field activities target specialized crime and justice-related contexts. UNICRI's field activities incorporate technical workshops, simulations, mentoring courses, and innovative practices. These are delivered in collaboration with subject-matter experts, as well as relevant academics, practitioners, and UN officials.

Evaluations of UNICRI programmes are utilized as a part of UNICRI's continuous learning and testing framework: to inform good practices, experiment with new approaches, and contribute to accumulated knowledge for future programming. This includes participating in or conducting evaluations that contribute to the collective learning of the UN at a global level, such as evaluations and meta-evaluations of UN entities implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.[38]

Advocacy and communication seek to influence transnational justice and security issues, advance awareness of new and emerging threats and responses, and shine a spotlight on accountability. Utilizing in-person and online modalities, including social media channels, UNICRI's advocacy ranges from convening and participating in high-level platforms for discussion, to educating and informing policymakers and stakeholders, and supporting innovative practices to engage a range of actors in solution formulation. Adaptability and innovation are key to UNICRI's persuasive advocacy and communication.

Cross-Cutting Themes: Gender, Climate Change, and Youth

Integral to the delivery of all its programmes, UNICRI incorporates the cross-cutting themes of **gender, climate change, and youth**. These key issues are critical to UNICRI's work when considering pathways for sustainable change in the fields of crime prevention and justice. *Placing women and girls at the centre, Protecting our planet,* and *Listening to and working with youth* have also been identified as fundamental UN Common Agenda commitments for the implementation of all the SDGs.[39]

Given its diversity of programme issues, contexts, locations, and beneficiaries, UNICRI tailors and adapts the ways in which these cross-cutting themes apply to each situation and desired outcome. In certain programmes, UNICRI applies targeted gender interventions, such as its work on gender-based discrimination in the Sahel region. Alternatively, the focus may be on a gendered approach, perspective, or the use of gender specialists in programme design and implementation. UNICRI also endeavours to have its work informed by the lived experiences of women and girls, as appropriate.

UNICRI's consideration of cross-cutting themes also focuses on context-specific challenges, such as climate change and its aggravating impacts in fragile contexts.[40] Climate change further informs UNICRI's research at the intersections and nexus points of justice and security challenges. This recognises the impact of climate change as more than a risk multiplier for conflict-affected and fragile contexts. It also acknowledges climate insecurity as a strategic consideration when reviewing – holistically – the risk landscape and the mutually and negatively reinforcing dynamics of climate change on human security.[41]

UNICRI supports the increasing momentum for meaningful and effective youth engagement and participation in programming as a core component of sustainable and long-lasting peacebuilding. UNICRI recognises young people of all genders as agents for change and stakeholders as well as a cohort with distinct vulnerabilities and needs, depending on the context. The voice of youth is critical to UNICRI's work in strengthening social cohesion, building resilience, and supporting community development, including the work of sports as an enabler.

Methodology and Consultation

UNICRI applied a hybrid project management model and mixed-methodology approach to the development of the UNICRI Strategic Programme Framework 2023 – 2026. This aligns with the dynamic and interconnected nature of UNICRI's work and the environment within which it operates. It used multiple and diverse methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection, review, and analysis. The research, data mapping, and threats analysis phase incorporated over 96 reports, articles, and research studies. This included UN documents, research reports, and analyses from UNICRI's research and programmes.

The UNICRI Strategic Programme Framework 2023 – 2026 process incorporated online and in-person consultations comprising interviews, group meetings, workshops, and surveys. Consultations and stakeholder engagements were collaborative and participatory, drawing from a depth and breadth of expertise, voices, and insights in the field of crime prevention, justice, security, and rule of law.

The process incorporated engagement with 160 participants in over 135 consultation meetings, interviews, and working groups during a seven-month period. It was inclusive of the following groups: UNICRI staff, UNICRI Board of Trustees, representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and international organizations with complementary mandates, academic and government institutions, subject matter experts, non-governmental organizations, programme partners, and beneficiaries of UNICRI projects.

This included engagement with 49 Member States, five UN agencies, entities, and affiliates, and over 35 subject matter experts spanning the public, private, and INGO sectors. This is in addition to the engagement with UNICRI staff and the Board of Trustees.

Approximately 52 per cent of participants in the consultation process were women.

A detailed list of the organizations and Member States that participated in the development of the Strategic Programme Framework 2023 – 2026 is available in the in the annex of the Strategic Programme Framework.

UNICRI continually strives to deepen its partnerships with Member States based upon common priorities and shared interests. Keeping UNICRI's work meaningful, relevant, and contemporary, as well as ensuring UNICRI continues to serve the needs of the international community and its beneficiaries is instrumental to our work and goals for peace, justice, and security.

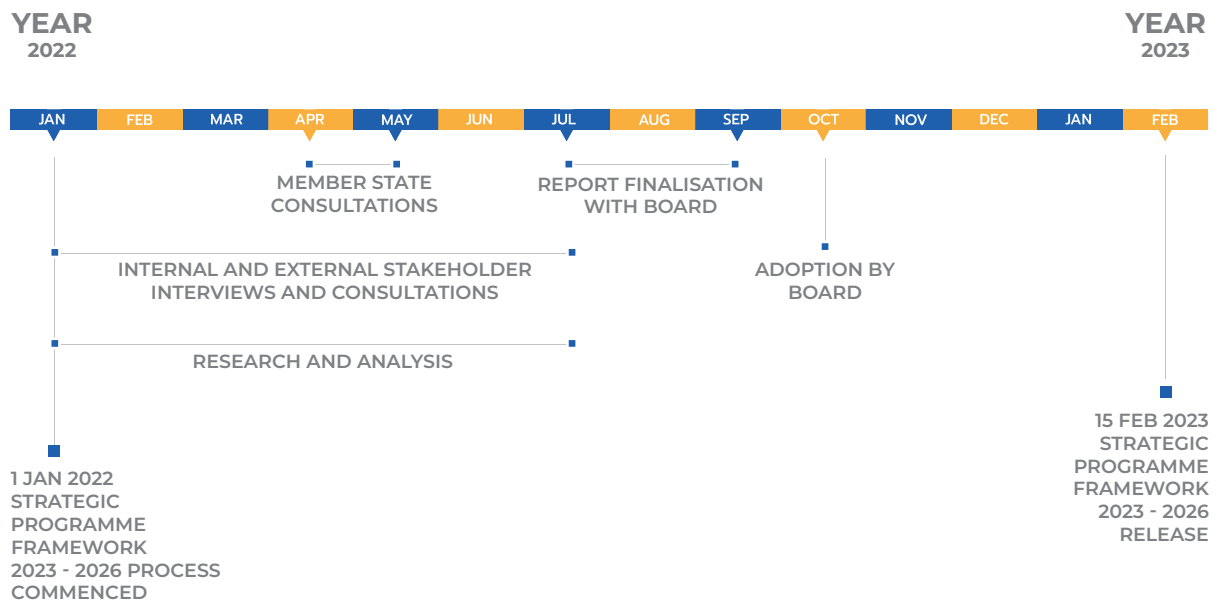UNICRI Board of Trustees President Jayantilial Karia,
Turin, July 2022

The rule of law and full respect for human rights are indispensable for ensuring security and sustainable development.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres,
New York, 22 September 2022

Annex

STRATEGIC PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

YEAR 2022

YEAR 2023

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB

MEMBER STATE CONSULTATIONS

REPORT FINALISATION WITH BOARD

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND CONSULTATIONS

ADOPTION BY BOARD

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

1 JAN 2022
STRATEGIC PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK 2023 - 2026 PROCESS COMMENCED

15 FEB 2023
STRATEGIC PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK 2023 - 2026 RELEASE

135
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND CONSULTATIONS

160
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN INTERVIEWS, CONSULTATION MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

52%
PROPORTION OF WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

35
SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS INTERVIEWED

96
RESEARCH, REPORTS, AND LITERATURE REVIEWED FROM DIVERSE SOURCES RELEVANT TO CRIME PREVENTION, JUSTICE, AND SECURITY

49
MEMBER STATES ENGAGED IN CONSULTATIONS

Member States consulted included:

Australia	Japan	Saint Lucia
Bolivia	Kazakhstan	Saudi Arabia
Botswana	Kenya	Sierra Leone
Burkina Faso	Kosovo	Somalia
Canada	Latvia	South Africa
Chile	Lesotho	Sovereign Order of Malta*
Colombia	Malaysia	Spain
Czech Republic	Mexico	Sweden
Denmark	Morocco	Switzerland
Ecuador	Netherlands	Tunisia
Ethiopia	North Macedonia	United Arab Emirates
Fiji	Norway	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
France	Palestine	
Germany	Peru	United States of America
Guatemala	Qatar	
Iran	Republic of Korea	Zambia
Italy	Republic of Moldova	

* The Order of Malta is a sovereign entity under international law with permanent observer status to the United Nations.

UNICRI is grateful to Italy for hosting consultations for the Strategic Programme Framework in New York and Rome.

5

UN AGENCIES, ENTITIES, AND AFFILIATES

International Atomic Energy Agency

International Development Law Organization

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

In addition, the Strategic Programme Framework 2023 – 2026 also drew from a wide selection of reports, data sources, and research published by United Nations agencies and entities.

End Notes

1　An offense is transnational in nature if: (a) It is committed in more than one State; (b) It is committed in one State but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction, or control takes place in another State; (c) It is committed in one State but involves an organized criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one State; or (d) It is committed in one State but has substantial effects in another State. United Nations, The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2482 (2019), adopted by the Security Council at its 8582nd meeting, on 19 July 2019.

2　UNICRI Board of Trustees Report to the Economic and Social Council 2020 available at https://unicri.it/institute/about_unicri/ecosoc_report.

3　The full UN Treaty collection is available at https://treaties.un.org/Pages/Home.aspx?clang=_en.

4　The Economic and Social Council decision titled "Report of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute to the Economic and Social Council" (document E/2022/L.8. Available at https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/ecosoc7087.doc.htm.

5　The Strategic Programme Framework recognises the limitations of discussing and categorising phenomena as ubiquitous and endemic as criminal threats. Nonetheless, for the purposes of context analysis, this section aims to give a measure of structure to these complex areas.

6　According to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, an "organized criminal group" shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefits. United Nations, 2000, Resolution 55/25, adopted by the UN General Assembly: 15 November 2000. Available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f55b0.html.

7　These activities typically include the trafficking of arms, persons, drugs, artifacts, and natural resources, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and bank robbery. Further information is available at UNICRI (2019) The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism.

8　An IBM security Intelligence 2020 report noted a 2000 increase in cyber-security incidents targeting the operational technologies employed in Critical National Infrastructures since 2019. More information is available at https://securityintelligence.com/posts/what-the-explosive-growth-in-ics-infrastructure-targeting-means-for-security-leaders/.

9　UNICRI (2021) Freedom from Fear Magazine, The Past, The Present, and The Future In our Hands!

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Risk Mitigation, Dec.

10　G. Waly (2022) Statements at the Opening and General Debate, 65th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 14-18 March 2022, UNODC. Available at: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/65_Session_2022/general_debate_statements.html.

11　For more information visit the UNICRI website at https://unicri.it/organized-crime-illegal-trafficking-and-illicit-financial-flows.

12　IFFs are defined broadly as the revenue, proceeds, and any other assets generated by corruption, theft, bribery, graft, and embezzlement of national wealth by government officials, illicit commerce tax evasion, misrepresentation, misreporting and mis-invoicing, money laundering through commercial transactions. More information is available at Hunter, Marcena (2018) Measures That Miss the Mark: Capturing Proceeds of Crime in Illicit Financial Flows Models.

13　Further information on state involvement in criminality and state officials as dominant brokers of organized crime is available at https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/ocindex-2021.

14　The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (2021) The Global Organized Crime Index, 2021.

15　European Union (2017) Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2017 (SOCTA 2017). Available at https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/report_socta2017_1.pdf.

16　EUIPO & Europol (2022) Intellectual Property Crime Threat Assessment. Available at Intellectual Property Crime Threat Assessment 2022 | Europol (europa.eu).

17　More information is available at Europol (2021) European Union Serious And Organized Crime Threat Assessment, A Corrupting Influence: The Infiltration And Undermining Of Europe's Economy And Society By Organized Crime. Available at European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) 2021 | Europol (europa.eu).

18　E. Zouave, et al. (2020) Artificially intelligent Cyberattacks FOI-R--4947--SE March.

19　UNICRI (2021) Child Sexual Exploitation Online: The New Face of the Menace and How to Fight it with Artificial Intelligence, 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Oct 5, 2021. Available at https://unicri.it/index.php/News/Child-Sexual-Exploitation-AI-UNGA-76.

20　UNICRI (2021) A Policy Framework for Responsible Limits on Facial Recognition 2021.pdf.

21　Human Rights Watch has released a number of reports on the risks and violations of human rights

due to surveillance, including the 2022 report How Dare They Peep into My Private Life? Children's Rights Violations by Governments that Endorsed Online Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic, May 25, 2022. These Reports are available at Technology and Rights | Human Rights Watch. (hrw.org).

22 United Nations (2021) Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General.

23 The term "sexual violence" here refers to rape. sexual slavery, forced prostitution, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity with a direct or indirect (temporal, geographic, or casual) link to conflict. See Security Council Resolution 2014/181.

24 UNICRI (2020) Covid-19, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Priorities: A Spotlight on Vulnerable Groups.

25 Further information on organised crime and their contexts is available at UNICRI (2021) Illicit Financial Flows and Asset Recovery in the Eastern Partnership Region: A Mapping of Needs and Recommendations.

26 UNICRI (2020) Many Hands on an Elephant. What enhances community resilience to radicalisation into violent extremism?

27 UNESCO (2016) The United Nations General Assembly defined 'youth', as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive, recognising this category is fluid and can vary between countries and regions. International Youth Year : Participation, Development, Peace : report of the Secretary-General 1981 (A/36/215, para. 8 of the annex). UNESCO Information Sheet on Youth and Culture https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/info_sheet_youth.pdf.

28 UNICRI (2020) Many Hands on an Elephant. What enhances community resilience to radicalisation into violent extremism?

29 'Soft' targets comprise areas where people routinely reside, gather or resort, including open places, places to which the public are admitted, as well as hotels, hospitals, churches, sports facilities, and centres.

30 The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (2021) The Global Organized Crime Index 2021. Available at: https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/ocindex-2021/.

31 United Nations (2021) The UN Global Compact. Available at https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/strategy.

32 United Nations (2012) The Role of the UN in Promoting the Rule of Law: Challenges and New Approaches December, No. 4 Vol. XLIX, Delivering Justice. Available at https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/role-un-promoting-rule-law-challenges-and-new-approaches.

33 Information about the UN Football for the Goals initiative that leverages the outreach power of football and the sport's global footprint to advance sustainability, equality, and human

rights can be found at Football for the Goals | United Nations. Information on the role of sports in programming is available at United Nations and Folke Bernadotte Academy (2021) Youth, Peace, and Security: A Programming Handbook.

34 The 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines "violence against women" as an act of violence perpetrated against women that can result in "physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering" (Article 1). In addition to acts of violence, the definition also includes threats to violence, coercion, and arbitrary detention, whether in a woman's private or public life.

35 The Justice gap for women refers to the disparity in access to justice and satisfaction of legal needs experienced by women and girls. This gap reflects women's unmet justice needs and the gap between women and men's access to justice. For more information see UN Women (2019) Justice for Women High-level Group Report. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Justice-for-women-High-level-group-report-en.pdf.

36 For further information on the crosscutting impacts of climate-related security risks see UNDP Policy Brief (2020) The Climate Security Nexus and The Prevention of Violent Extremism.

37 The 'rule of law' refers to a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency." Report of the Secretary-General on the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-conflict Societies, S/2004/616 (of 23 August 2004).

38 UNICRI (2021) Learn Better, Together: Independent Meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Available at https://unicri.it/Publications/Independent-meta-synthesis-Global-Counter-Terrorism-Strategy.

39 United Nations (2021) Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General.

40 UNDP Policy Brief (2020) The Climate Security Nexus and The Prevention of Violent Extremism: Working at The Intersection Of Major Development Challenges. Available at https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/UNDP-Climate-Security-Nexus-and-Prevention-of-violent-extremism.pdf.

41 Nations Environment Programme, 2020, Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change, United UN Women, UNDP and UNDPPA/PBSO11 June 2020.