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The background of the section header is the United Nations emblem, which features a world map surrounded by olive branches.

## UNODC

# United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**Topic:** Combating the Increase in  
Trafficking of Falsified Medical  
Products During Pandemic Crises.

## **Committee: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

Established in 1997, for two decades the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has been thriving to achieve a world safer from drugs, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism. The UNODC is devoted to providing health, security, and justice for all by promoting peace and sustainable well-being.

This committee is a global leader that specializes in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime as well as being responsible for enforcing The United Nations lead program on terrorism. The UNODC was founded as a unification of the United Nations Drug Programme (UNDP) and the Center for International Crime Prevention (ICPC).

The UNODC works to raise awareness in people throughout the world about the dangers of drug abuse and to strengthen international action against drug production and trafficking. To achieve those purposes, this committee has launched an arrangement of initiatives, including alternatives in the area of illicit drug crop cultivation, monitoring of illicit crops, and the implementation of projects against money laundering.

The main responsibilities performed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime consist of assisting the Member States in building their capacity through criminal justice reforms to follow the rule of the pre-established laws, as well as protect and ensure legal rights that individuals and groups can confide under domestic and international law. The committee develops multiple Campaigns, Crime Congresses, and Commissions such as the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ).

UNODC tackles many different issues throughout the world. These issues include alternative development, corruption, crime prevention, and criminal justice, drug prevention, treatment and care, drug trafficking, firearms, fraudulent medicines, HIV and AIDS, Human trafficking and migrant smuggling, money-laundering, organized crime, maritime crime and piracy, terrorism prevention, and wildlife and forest crime.

UNODC has collaborated in the past with many other committees of the UN and it will continue to work together with these. Some of the committees are UNDP, UN Women, Security Council, UNFPA, UNAIDS, United Nations Office of Counter-

Terrorism, MINUSCA, MINUSMA, and MINUTSAH.

As a United Nations committee that works worldwide, it is only natural that the UNODC has partnered with many different NGOs. Organizations such as Lions Club International, Benevolentia Foundation, Drug Abuse Prevention Center, Caixa Seguradora, IADC Foundation, Access to Health Fund, the members of the Vienna NGO Committee, and many others.

The voluntary contributions of member states, NGOs, private sector, UN committees, and other sources are what compromise the bulk of UNODC funding to support UNODC mandate areas that are associated with drug control and crime prevention. However, funding is still a challenge to the UNODC and it can become an obstacle in achieving the 2030 agenda. There is a growing demand to support member states in their efforts to eradicate organized crime, terrorism, trafficking, etc.

## **Topic: Combating the Increase in Trafficking of Falsified Medical Products During Pandemic Crises.**

### **I. History of the Topic**

It is proven that due to the current pandemic crime and drug trafficking have increased just as the demand for medical products to assist the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation that has led to an expansion in the trafficking of certain falsified products such as medicines, antibiotics, vaccines, and multiple medical products. Unfortunately, this virus has further highlighted the deficiency in regulatory and legal frameworks that are dedicated to preventing the trafficking of such products previously mentioned according to the recent report made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020).

It is important to mention that, nowadays organized criminal groups have exploited multiple gaps and uncertainties attached to the virus by pretending to hold up the demand for medical products that are short in supply making them almost approachless for people and communities. The falsification of medical products imply significant risks for public health and multiple organizations as products may not be treating the disease correctly and in a proper way and sometimes even making the user situation even worse, facilitating the development of drug resistance. Just as the UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly mentioned, health

and lives are at risk and criminals are now taking advantage of the unsteady situation with a transnational crime in national regulation voids of oversight to peddle substandard medical products (UNODC, 2020).

Assorted evidence shows that frauds, scams, and seizures have been carried out by different criminal groups from around the globe submitting the justice system into constant troubles due to illicit events. All these involve the manufacturing of substandard and falsified medicines that have followed the constant transmission of the virus (European Commission, 2020).

## **II. Current Issues**

As in the case of German health authorities, in which two sale companies in Switzerland and Germany acquired a dispatch of various face masks that was worth 15 million euros through a cloned website of a supposedly legitimate company in Spain. The constant development of the emerging pandemic has also seen data-compromise frauds, including scamming of business email compromise and the manipulation of corporate websites which function by convincing purchasers that the source is genuine (UNODC, 2020).

Along with the case previously mentioned UNODC's research also predicts that the behavior of organized criminal groups will continuously change and progress over the advance of the pandemic, as well as when some experimental vaccines come out in the market these groups will shift their priorities into trafficking medicines to trying to sell a false vaccine assuring uncertain results leading to fraud and illegal practices (UN News, 2020).

On September 27, 2020, a man from Odisha's Bargarh (India) was booked for manufacturing a fraudulent vaccine against Covid-19. An individual was trying to get permission for selling the vaccine on the market, fortunately, this situation was prevented since an inroad conducted by officials of drug control administration and police, seized twelve vials of the supposed vaccine from the house of the accused, known as Prahallad Bishi. The vaccines seized claimed to be Covid-19 Vaccines, a few syringes, and medical products were also confiscated during the incursion. The culprit has not yet been detained but a case has been registered against the accused with the Bheden authorities (The New Indian Express, 2020).

The main reason for the concern of the crucial need of strengthening legal frameworks and penalties into a more organized global approach to reduce and get over the criminalization of the manufacture and trafficking of falsified medical products is the political, economic, and social responsibility of countries into solving with a common approach that intends to enable effective responses to crimes in public health. While also preventing, oversight, and detect the corresponding responses to medical product-related crimes which will require the cooperation of communities working in the medical product sector to achieve additional resources that will be useful in future pandemics. It is necessary to induce countries to increase the global cooperation of closing oversight gaps and build law enforcement and develop justice capacities to drive public awareness in society keeping individuals safe from fraud and deception of medical products (UNODC, 2020).

According to current reports, more than 2,000 online coronavirus scams took place during March, which included 471 fake online shops selling deceitful COVID-19 medical products. Moreover, police in France removed 70 fraudulent websites claiming to sell chloroquine during April. Covid-19 scams in the United States of America amounted to approximately 13.4 million dollars in fraud, from the beginning of January to mid-April of this year. All this affecting more than 18,000 citizens all along (UN News, 2020).

Meanwhile, during the beginning of the year 2020, 1,541 cyberattacks related to illicit medical commerce were detected in the United Arab Emirates including 775 malware threats, 621 email spam attacks, and 145 URL attacks. Additionally, a seizure of 3,300 thermometers was carried out in Thailand. These thermometers had been trafficked through three other countries and Italy reported that they did not comply with the requirements and regulations set by the European Union (UN News, 2020).

Another report that must be taken into account as well as the one with several organized criminal groups in the Western Balkans, which were believed to be involved in money laundering and investing their illicit gains in the production and trafficking of falsified medical products and different types of protective clothing. There have been other substandard and falsified ventilators in Russia, this was a fraud inquiry that has just begun, as well as in the United Kingdom, where ventilators that were supplied proved to be potentially dangerous affecting negatively the healthcare equipment in different hospitals. The trafficking of substandard ventilators was also a case in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UN News, 2020).



According to the information previously mentioned, it is important to emphasize the importance of the fight against falsified medicinal products, which is not only essential from a public health perspective but also necessary to reduce the scope of organized crime. Trafficking of all health products must be addressed, including active ingredients and medical devices. Substandard and falsified medical product investigation requires a vast collaboration amid agencies nationally and internationally speaking, all this with the purpose of discerning traffickers over borders using all the available resources (UNODC, 2020).

### **III. UN Actions**

Significant efforts have been made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime which recently launched a "Guide to Combat Crime related to falsified chemical products". Additionally, the UNODC has been determined in undertaking the problem in the international community over the past 10 years, to improve the global cooperation and collaboration among national agencies that are currently involved in addressing crimes related to medical products. However, the deficiency of collaboration between various public agencies involved in the opposition of substandard and falsified medical products is still a common and immense challenge that becomes evident, especially during the current pandemic (UNODC, 2020). Some of these organizations that work towards the elimination of illicit drugs are the participant NGOs of the World Federation against drugs, OAS, OSCE, and Drug-Free America.

In 2012 The World Health Organization (WHO) established The World Health Assembly with the Member State mechanism specifically to provide oversight and strong commitment among the Member States and WHO. This assembly is dedicated to preventing and controlling substandard and falsified medical products. These collaborations have as a result multiple commissions and guide studies that function by increasing the understanding of the factors that lead to falsification, poor production, and distribution practices. A study of the public health and socioeconomic impact of substandard and falsified medical products is published in conjunction with the GSMS (Global Surveillance and Monitoring System for substandard and falsified medical products) report. Working groups led by the Member States have made important contributions that help countries to prevent the production and sale of these potentially dangerous products to detect and respond to them when they do occur (WHO, 2017).

The International Institute of Research Against Counterfeit Medicines (IRACM) has been educating citizens and authorities on the overcoming of counterfeit and fraudulent medical products and drugs. This Institute has trained and raised awareness in several groups of people from all around the globe acknowledging the several dangers and consequences of the acquisition of fraudulent medicines by giving out prevention methods for the common deceptions that hospitals, institutions, and pharmaceutical centers suffer (IRACM, 2018).

#### **IV. Conclusions**

Countries need to be fully committed to the fight against trafficking by increasing international cooperation between the different administrations and organizations concerned. In addition to that trafficking of all types of medical products must be addressed, including active ingredients and medical devices. Otherwise, if this situation is not handled properly there will be monumental consequences on an international level. All this must be accomplished by taking proper actions and developing wise and cautious collaborations between countries and organizations, bringing together healthcare professionals, customs, police, and justice services, as well as private companies so all these bodies can reach a solution (MAE, 2013).

Unfortunately, nowadays the cooperation between countries is being immobilized by resource deficiencies. While digital records have become very common and require forensic analysis to examine them, investigators do not always have full access to such facilities. Concurrently it is important to consider the efforts being made by the UNODC and the WHO which have the purpose of raising awareness and diminishing the illicit products on the market, as well as the multiple organizations and institutions that constantly collaborate in making the recurrence of the problem less expected (UNODC, 2020).

This committee calls upon the participant delegations to provide well-established solutions to this issue. The problem of illicit drugs will keep growing if actions are not taken. These criminal groups are adapting and changing to commit their illegal actions. With vaccines for COVID-19 in development, it is safe to assume that criminal organizations will attempt to sell fakes, putting the life of the patients in danger.

#### **V. Guiding Questions**

1. Which actions are being executed by your country to maintain a stable healthcare system?
2. What can your country do to stop or prevent the trafficking of fraudulent medical products?
3. What partnerships can emerge to secure the legal commerce of health products?
4. Which activities can be promoted by the citizens of your country to reach a solution?
5. How can citizens from your country address the problem and prevent fraud?
6. Do the government bodies in your country are raising awareness about the topics?
7. Does your country have any cyber-security systems that prevent trafficking and illegal commerce?

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