



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

THE 2024-2026 STRATEGY

NEW WAYS TO THINK AND ACT

FEBRUARY 2024



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ORGANIZED CRIME

FROM VISION TO ACTION: A DECADE OF ANALYSIS, DISRUPTION AND RESILIENCE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime was founded in 2013. Its vision was to mobilize a global strategic approach to tackling organized crime by strengthening political commitment to address the challenge, building the analytical evidence base on organized crime, disrupting criminal economies and developing networks of resilience in affected communities. Ten years on, the threat of organized crime is greater than ever before and it is critical that we continue to take action by building a coordinated global response to meet the challenge.

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INTRODUCTION

The world is facing a number of serious and often interlinked threats and challenges, including violent conflicts, climate change, growing inequality, the impact of rapid technological innovation and mass migration. Organized crime cuts across all of these issues: it is either an enabler of these trends or profits from them. It grows in the cracks of our fractured world.

For example, criminals traffic weapons into or out of conflict zones from Afghanistan to Ukraine, and from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Sudan. Criminal groups are increasingly being used as a tool of statecraft to undermine opponents, prop up or topple governments, or carry out hybrid or proxy warfare. They are contributing to the destruction of our natural environment through illegal logging, overfishing and the illegal dumping of waste. They prey on the poor through extortion or by luring victims into human trafficking. Through ‘organized corruption’, state-embedded criminal actors are using all possible means to hang on to power and dole out patronage at the expense of public resources and institutions. Furthermore, criminals are quick to adapt to the latest technology, harnessing ransomware and artificial intelligence, or moving money or sending messages using encryption.

The latest edition of the Global Organized Crime Index (2023) reveals that greater attention must be devoted to addressing financial crime – now ranked as the biggest criminal market in the world. Furthermore, it is vital to identify and disrupt the role of professional facilitators in the private and public sectors who are at the interface of illicit and licit markets.

In short, there is a continued and urgent need for research and action around organized crime to promote new thinking and responses to understand criminal markets, actors and the ecosystems that enable them and to strengthen community resilience and trans-border cooperation. This is not a fringe issue; it goes to the heart of enhancing international peace and security, promoting sustainable development, improving governance of the global commons, reducing the impact of environmental degradation and enhancing multilateral cooperation (for example in the context of the Summit of the Future).



THE GI-TOC ENTERS ITS SECOND PHASE

The GI-TOC has been in existence for ten years. It started out as a small network of mostly law enforcement personnel concerned about the harms posed by illicit economies. A decade later, the GI-TOC's added value includes the following achievements:

- Being the single largest civil society organization committed to analyzing and responding to illicit economies
- Hosting the only multi-stakeholder global network against organized crime, uniting close to 700 experts representing different regions and sectors
- Establishing seven observatories focusing on illicit economies
- Operating a Resilience Fund that supports more than 170 organizations and individuals, in 55 countries
- Producing an annual output of more than 90 high-quality and high-impact publications that shine a light on a wide variety of criminal markets and actors from different parts of the world
- Publishing the first-ever Global Organized Crime Index, covering all 193 UN Member States, with the additional feature of measuring each country's resilience to organized crime
- Being a thought-leader in proposing new methodologies for analyzing organized crime and designing more effective strategic and policy responses to prevent and disrupt it

While this tenth anniversary is a good opportunity to celebrate and reflect on how far the GI-TOC has come in a short period of time, our research shows that there is much work to be done.

This medium-term strategy for 2024–26 maps out a number of objectives that the GI-TOC intends to strive for, consistent with its mandate to improve the knowledge and evidence base on illicit economies, and strengthen resilience and multilateral responses. The strategic objectives seek to address some of the vulnerabilities highlighted by the 2023 Global Organized Crime Index and build on recommendations put forward by the GI-TOC on possible elements of a global strategy against transnational organized crime. It is a living document, and therefore it remains open and can adapt to changing priorities, and global developments, ensuring that the GI-TOC is an innovative, proactive thought- and policy leader on this topic.

THE GI-TOC THEORY OF CHANGE

OUTCOME GOAL: To reduce organized crime and mitigate its negative impact on people, the environment, business and states.

We believe that any positive change needs to be predicated upon sound current information and an evidence basis that provides a granular understanding of the local political economy embedded within the global geopolitical context. Relevant and timely analysis, and recommendations based upon best practice, real-world experience and innovation are the foundation to achieve such change. Producing such analysis and introducing its findings to policymakers to influence change is the mission of the GI-TOC. We put forward solutions at local, state, regional and global levels among policy circles and change makers. To ensure proactivity, the GI-TOC catalyzes and delivers experimental and innovative programming, testing new ideas in difficult environments, to identify scalable and sustainable solutions. Yet, achieving systemic change is a slow process. Recognizing the time sensitivity and overwhelmingly negative impact of organized crime on people, the environment, business and states, the GI-TOC has developed more direct measures to protect communities and reduce organized crime, by strengthening community resilience and disrupting criminal markets.

The GI-TOC has identified four focus areas to achieve the change it has set out in its mandate:

1. Better analysis and evidence basis
2. Market disruption
3. Resilience building
4. Inclusive networks of action

Pushing forward the work of the GI-TOC in all four areas, collaborating with partners and relevant institutions, and building networks for action are what we believe constitute the best strategy to counter organized crime and reduce its impact. ■



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2024–2026

1. IMPROVE ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE BASIS

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: Carry out policy-relevant research on illicit economies that can contribute to better analysis and enrich the evidence basis to guide informed responses and set priorities.

Over the next three years, the GI-TOC will continue to publish high-quality reports on illicit economies. This will be done by expanding its geographical and thematic focus, while maintaining a high standard of research in regions where it is well established. Furthermore, it will develop its range of public information outputs – including podcasts, videos and content for the GI-TOC website – to more broadly disseminate its work. It will also increase the number of publications in languages other than English.

Based on the diagnostic provided by the Global Index and strategic actions outlined in the global strategy, over the next three years, the GI-TOC will focus its work on topics, regions and countries where illicit economies have a growing impact. This includes financial crime, environmental crime, extractives, state-embedded actors, organized crime in urban environments, arms trafficking, facilitators along supply chains, as well as the relationship between violent conflicts and illicit economies. To ensure truly global coverage, the GI-TOC will build up its presence in Asia and Latin America (including in the Amazon), and increase its focus on Western Europe, Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Rather than focusing solely on threats and challenges, the GI-TOC will identify and share good practices. Over the next three years, the GI-TOC will develop an online visualization tool to provide a user-friendly platform to publicly share this information consistent with the GI-TOC's goal of being a learning organization.

In 2025, the GI-TOC will produce the third edition of the Global Organized Crime Index. This flagship publication will enable the GI-TOC to fine-tune its methodology and measure progress in comparison to results from the first two editions (2021 and 2023). Furthermore, during the strategy period the Index team will seek to use the data from the Global Index in creative ways to identify emerging trends and the relationship

between illicit economies and global megatrends. The GI-TOC will seek to make a meaningful contribution to the 15th UN Crime Congress, which is scheduled to take place in 2026.

Key activities

- Publish more than 90 high-quality and high-impact publications every year
- Expand research on, financial crime, environmental crime and arms trafficking, among others
- Raise the GI-TOC's profile in Latin America, Central and Western Asia and Western Europe, and expand its presence in Asia
- Deepen and expand research on links between conflict, instability and illicit economies
- Develop an online tool to collect and share good practices in preventing and combating organized crime
- Promote policies that address the threat posed by state-embedded actors and foster more joined-up approaches to cutting the links between organized crime and corruption
- Produce the third edition of the Global Organized Crime Index

2. DEVELOP INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING FOR MARKET DISRUPTION

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: Develop programming for disruption and reduction of criminal markets.

Although organized crime is a global menace, there is no global strategy to counteract it. That is why the GI-TOC will publish a report mapping out ideas of a global strategy against organized crime, which includes actions for governments, law enforcement agencies, the private sector and civil society to more effectively prevent and counteract organized crime. Promoting the ideas and approaches outlined in the report will be one of the main priorities of the GI-TOC medium-term strategy between 2024 and 2026. This will include systems thinking and the 'intersections approach' to analyze and disrupt supply chains and ecosystems of illicit economies.

A growing availability of information in the public domain is enabling a democratization of information gathering and analysis on illicit economies, while technology can be harnessed as a tool for good rather than just an enabler for criminal actors. During the strategy period, the GI-TOC will make further use of open-source intelligence (OSINT) and satellite data to enhance information gathering. It will also use tech tools to identify and seek to disrupt online markets. For example, the GI-TOC will scale up techniques pioneered by the GI-TOC's Market Monitoring and Friction Unit in a programme called ECO-SOLVE, which is designed to develop intelligence, evidence and data to more effectively combat environmental crime.

Organized crime adapts quickly and opportunistically. To keep pace, more attention and resources need to be devoted to anticipating future trajectories of organized crime. To that end, during the next strategy period the GI-TOC will develop a foresight group to look at the intersection of organized crime with global trends and develop innovative ideas for enhancing prevention and preparedness.

More broadly, the GI-TOC will explore possibilities of making its fieldwork more operational – moving beyond observatories (which document the phenomenon), towards catalysts that work to disrupt illicit

economies, including introducing friction through investigations, awareness raising and advocacy mobilization, and fostering social and behavioural change.

Key activities

- Publish and disseminate elements of a global strategy against transnational organized crime
- Be actively engaged in promoting multilateral and bilateral efforts to adopt and implement such a strategy, including in the context of the Summit of the Future
- Make more effective use of technology for disrupting criminal markets, including through the ECO-SOLVE project on combating environmental crime and exploring the possible uses of artificial intelligence
- Strengthen ties with law enforcement agencies and regional organizations to increase information sharing and enable a greater impact of GI-TOC recommendations on policy and operational responses
- Document strategies and programmes that offer innovations, lessons learned and best practices for replication
- Establish a foresight group to anticipate possible future trajectories of organized crime

3. STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: Reduce the harmful impact of organized crime by highlighting the plight of victims and survivors, and by supporting – and, where necessary, launching – community-based initiatives that strengthen resilience to organized crime.

The GI-TOC is a civil society network that is designed to help members of civil society stand up to and develop resilience to organized crime. To that end, one of the GI-TOC's most important pillars is the Resilience Fund, which has supported over 170 individuals and CSOs in 55 countries around the world.

Between 2024 and 2026, the GI-TOC will endeavour to scale up the Resilience Fund – both in terms of its resources and its geographical reach. Particular focus will be put on countries that have low resilience scores in the Global Index. Furthermore, innovative pilot projects will be launched to promote community resilience and disruption in hotspots identified in the GI-TOC's research, for example in West Africa.

The GI-TOC will maintain a strong focus on human rights in relation to organized crime. This will include continued monitoring of crime-related assassinations, forced disappearances, as well as threats to human rights defenders, investigative journalists and other civil society actors on the front lines of revealing the activities of criminal groups. It will also provide guidance and capacity-building to its civil society partners on how to increase their safety. The GI-TOC will also seek to raise attention on the need for compensation and support for victims of organized crime.

Key activities

- Treble the number of grantees supported between 2024 and 2026, and double the number of countries where the Resilience Fund works
- Develop and pioneer tools to enable communities to share experiences in building resilience, and to promote knowledge exchange and better practices

- Advocate for making civil society voices heard in multilateral platforms
- Place victims and survivors of organized crime in the spotlight, and take steps to enhance the protection of human rights defenders and civil society advocates

4. EXPAND NETWORKS OF ACTION

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: Build coordinated, multi-stakeholder and inclusive networks of action and integrity, with global influence and reach.

Generating debates around proposals for a global strategy against organized crime will enable the GI-TOC to strengthen its networks of action. For example, a triangular relationship could be strengthened between the GI-TOC, UNODC and INTERPOL to spearhead the strategy formulation process, capitalizing on the possibility of putting organized crime on the agenda of the Future Summit, scheduled to take place in 2024, and events leading up to and marking the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2025 and the 15th UN Crime Congress in 2026. The strategy discussion process could also help strengthen partnerships with regional organizations as well as platforms such as EMPACT.

Over the next three years, the GI-TOC will seek to strengthen partnerships with regional organizations, not least through encouraging dialogue and new approaches triggered by the findings of the Global Index and Global Strategy. The GI-TOC will also continue to be active in the UN setting, taking full advantage of its new ECOSOC status.

The GI-TOC will also stimulate debate and new approaches to reducing the harmful impact of organized crime on security, development and governance through its Development Dialogues and discussions around its research. Furthermore, it will continue to provide evidence-based and informed inputs to debates around decriminalization and legalization of drugs.

Both the Global Organized Crime Index 2023 and the global strategy show how the private sector is intrinsically enmeshed in illicit economies. Therefore, the private sector needs to be part of any initiative designed to disrupt and degrade criminal markets. The GI-TOC will seek to strengthen its partnerships with private sector actors, for example in relation to combating IFFs, environmental crime and trafficking in human beings.

Galvanizing academic and educational networks is key to the GI-TOC's mission. Through the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime (IASOC), the GI-TOC will continue to serve as a conduit for academic research development, debate and research dissemination by expanding IASOC's membership base and increasing our presence and participation at various research society conferences around the world. Alongside this, the GI-TOC publishes, in partnership with the London School of Economics, the *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development*. We will focus on increasing the profile, diversity of authorship and publication outputs, and overall policy impact of the journal. We will also continue to build on our network of core university partners, expanding our array of MOUs, with a particular focus on universities in the Global South.

The Global Initiative Network of Experts (henceforth, 'the Network') now comprises almost 700 experts from around the world. Reflecting geographical and thematic areas of vulnerability identified in the Global Organized Crime Index, efforts will be made in the next three years to increase the number of Network members in Asia and Africa, engage more female members, and engage more closely with youth.

Key activities

- Develop at least one partnership per year with a private sector entity
- Sign at least one MOU per year with a regional or subregional organization
- Establish an organized crime research network by 2025
- Grow the Network to 800 members by 2025, with a particular focus on new members from Africa and Asia, and improve gender parity
- Streamline management of the Network through project management and customer relationship management tools

5. IMPROVE OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: Strengthen the operational effectiveness of the organization to ensure good management, effective oversight and accountability, sustained growth, a safe and motivated staff, and professional, high-profile outputs.

The GI-TOC's structure has evolved organically over time since its founding in 2012 to reach the internal architecture that guides its governance and management principles today.

The GI-TOC has grown quickly, and staff are geographically dispersed. Over the next three years, an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system will be introduced to integrate centralized core functions and decentralized operations. The ERP system should also help to enhance transparent, accountable and effective financial management and internal controls. The ERP will have functionalities such as recording staff time, keeping track of recruitment and performance management of staff, which will streamline human resources systems and procedures.

The GI-TOC has developed career paths that will be set up as part of staff development in the next strategy period. We are also implementing new policies focusing on communication, training and other staff-centred requirements.

The GI-TOC covers an increasing number of thematic and geographic areas. To ensure coherence, during the next three years the GI-TOC will develop a clearer conceptual framework for the matrixing of thematic and geographic work, and how this is represented on the GI website. Furthermore, steps will be taken to further enhance cooperation between GI-TOC observatories.

The GI-TOC will continue to attract top-quality individuals to join its team from a diverse spectrum of geographical and professional backgrounds who are committed to the vision and ethics of the organization. Priority areas for staff development in the next strategy period include skills development, security training and protocols (including cyber security), OSINT skills, legal risk mitigation, and media and communications skills. Further steps will be taken to ensure that staff are properly informed and trained on any new software, for example related to enterprise resource planning as well as financial and information management, and that the Operations Manual and video tutorials cover a wide range of relevant topics to enable staff to learn or refresh new skills and have access to necessary information. Steps will also be taken to improve on-boarding of staff.

As for the governance of the organization and the management of the Network, the Network Coordination team (now Governance team) have taken over all governance agendas to centralize

and coordinate from one single team across the various boards, thereby enhancing the governance structure, and help make the organization work in a sustainable way.

The management of the Network members (who numbered 668 at the end of 2023) will be streamlined through project management and a CRM tool to facilitate comprehensive communication with members.

Key activities

- Roll out an integrated management system by the end of 2024 that can support a global organization effectively and efficiently
- Ensure consistently clean statutory and project audits
- Promote staff well-being and welfare, as guided by staff engagement surveys and feedback



WHAT IS OUR IMPACT? THE PROGRESS INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

To measure the progress of the organization, and to build an evidence basis, the GI-TOC has identified a set of key indicators. Most indicators are measured at the level of individual projects, or by regional observatories and initiatives, against their project/regional objectives and goals. As this system of progress measures works from the bottom to the top of the organization, the ability to roll up results and aggregate them to understand what proportion of projects are achieving their goals is another important metric. At the same time, however, the organization is greater than the sum of its parts, which is reflected in some indicators that are measured at organizational level only.

Achieving the overall mandate of the GI-TOC would require seeing high-level change in both a set of organized-crime-specific global, regional and national indicators, but it would also require changes in some more foundational characteristics of the enabling environment and drivers of crime, such as the strength and quality of the rule of law, overall improvements in socio-economic equity and development, access to human rights, freedom of expression, stability and viable livelihoods, and better governance both in a majority of states and in shared spaces and concepts, such as cyberspace, the maritime zones, environmental protection and preservation, and the ownership of and access to intellectual property.

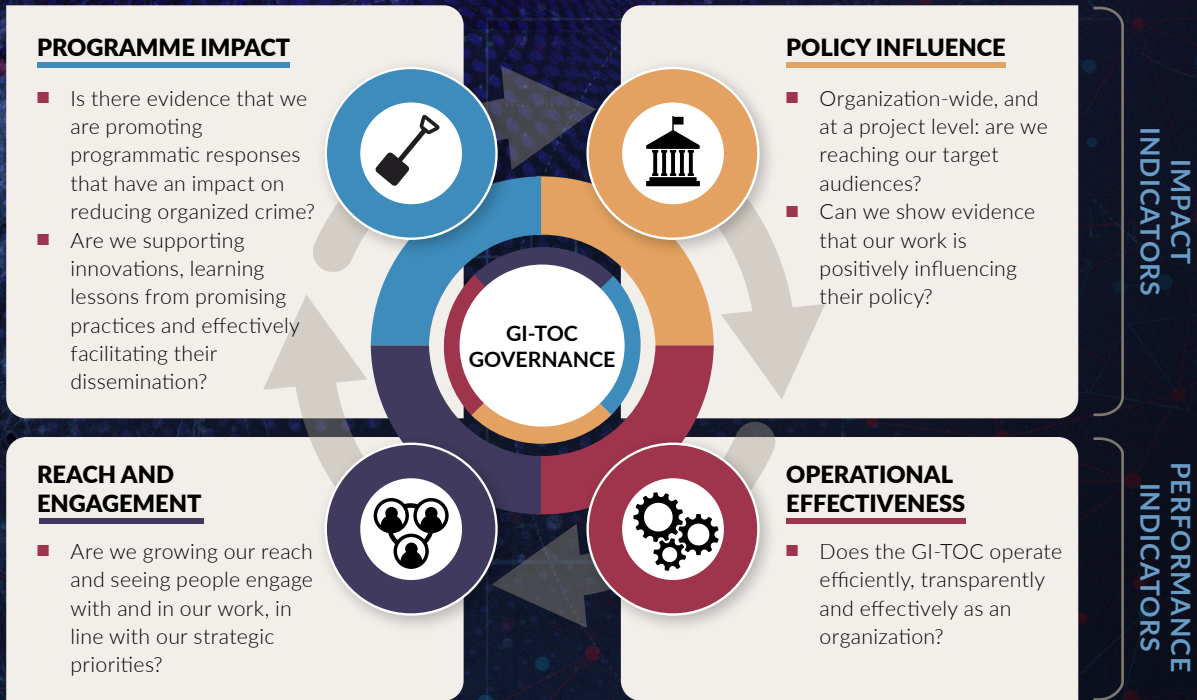
1. The GI-TOC's impact

Given intervening factors and the global scope of these issues, attributing such high-level changes to the work of the GI-TOC alone is impossible. Therefore, while monitoring changes in high-level indicators, the GI-TOC has identified key areas that allow one to measure a more direct impact of the organization, and thus the contribution the organization makes to high-level changes.

2. The GI-TOC's performance

The sustainability of the GI-TOC's impact is closely linked to reputation, reach and operational effectiveness of the organization. Only if the organisation is successful in all these areas will it ensure its sustained impact on reducing organized crime and its negative impact.

GI-TOC PROGRESS INDICATOR FRAMEWORK





CONCLUSIONS: PROVIDING DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE

There is a growing sense that the world needs more effective ways of preventing and dealing with organized crime. Moving forward, the GI-TOC will continue to play a catalytic role through its research and policy recommendations to analyze and respond to illicit economies in innovative ways. It will seek to build bridges between different sectors – particularly civil society and governments – and facilitate more joined-up responses between different regions. It will strengthen its identity as a learning organization, and grow knowledge networks and communities of action to reduce the harm caused by organized crime.

This medium-term strategy is designed to provide a sense of direction for the GI-TOC for the next three years. It should also enable the GI-TOC to help the world develop a clearer sense of direction for mitigating the worst effects of a growing problem.

Strategic measures of success

Reflecting on the strategic objectives and key activities outlined in this strategy, by the end of 2026 the main measures of success should be:

- Recognition of the GI-TOC as the leading global civil society partner in combating organized crime
- Close strategic partnerships between the GI-TOC and key actors, including UNODC and INTERPOL, as well as regional organizations
- Adoption of a global strategy against organized crime
- Use of the Global Index as the basis for measuring improvements in combating organized crime
- A Resilience Fund with annual capital of at least €2 million
- Enhanced in-house expertise on financial crime and the impact of technology on illicit economies
- A network of GI-TOC observatories with truly global coverage
- Recognition of the GI-TOC's work on the use of technology to disrupt criminal markets, particularly through the ECO-SOLVE project
- A foresight group recognized for innovative strategic anticipation



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ACERCA DE THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime es una red global con más de 600 expertos alrededor del mundo. The Global Initiative provee una plataforma para promover un mayor debate y enfoques innovadores como pilares en la construcción de una estrategia global inclusiva contra el crimen organizado.

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