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Letter from the Executive Board

Honorable Delegates,

We are delighted to extend our invitation to the Group of 20 for the International Youth Conference 2024. Our committee will tackle a pressing and significant issue: "Combating Illicit Smuggling and Human Trafficking in South Asia". This topic calls for our urgent attention as we address the challenges and seek effective strategies to address illicit smuggling and human trafficking and its far-reaching consequences in the region.

Prepare yourselves for two days of rigorous discussions, intense debates, and the opportunity to propose innovative solutions. Our agenda aims to comprehensively analyse the multifaceted aspects of illicit smuggling, including its social, economic, and political impacts. Delegates should come prepared to engage in thought-provoking conversations and contribute fresh perspectives.

We emphasise the importance of being well-informed beyond the provided background guide. Your dedication to extensive research will enable us to generate meaningful dialogue and propose actionable measures. Together, we will create an inclusive environment where all delegate's ideas are heard and respected.

We are eager to witness the expertise and creativity each of you brings to the conference. We are confident that by actively participating, sharing insights, and engaging in constructive debates, we will make a substantial impact in combating illicit smuggling in South Asian countries.

We assure you that the G20 Committee in the International Youth Conference 2024 will be an unforgettable experience that enriches your knowledge and sparks fruitful discussions.
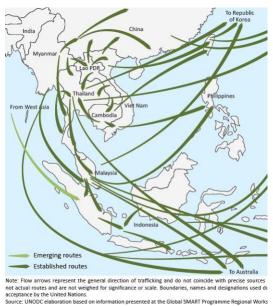Welcome to the Group of 20.

Regards,

Siddhant Ray, Chair
Adya Thanawala, Vice Chair

Introduction

Illicit smuggling in South Asia comes with large threats to regional stability, economic development, and security. This illegal trade involves drugs, arms, wildlife, counterfeit goods, and human trafficking, fostered by porous borders and geographic proximity between countrieslike India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The drug trade—the heroin coming from the "Golden Crescent" (Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan)—feeds organized crime groups and leads to corruption and violence. The trafficking of arms fuels conflicts; both parties profit and continue activities that elude the forces of law and order, and illegal weapons are often traced back to sources in conflict zones or clandestine workshops. Wildlife trafficking is becoming a cause of biodiversity loss in South Asia, which remains a key source and transit point for many endangered species and their by-products.

Drugs and electronic goods, two of the most common types of counterfeiting products, come with economic and health risks since they undermine the legitimate business through these counterfeits and put consumers at risk. Human trafficking—for women and children who are being enslaved into forced labour and sexual exploitation—stems from extreme economic inequalities between countries and lax law enforcement. Regional cooperation in combating smuggling must ensue based on intelligence sharing and joint operations. Only an attack on the very roots of poverty and political instability will robustly impose enforcement and find success in disrupting such illicit networks while mitigating their impact on South Asia.

I. History of the agenda

Note: Flow arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources
not actual routes and are not weighed for significance or scale. Boundaries, names and designations used do
acceptance by the United Nations.
Source: UNODC elaboration based on information presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Works

Before the 1900s, colonial trade dynamics and regional conflicts were major factors affecting illicit smuggling in South Asia. The most dominant role was played by the British East India Company, especially so in the case of the opium trade between India and China during the 18th and 19th centuries. The opium plant, produced mainly in the regions of Bengal and Bihar in India, was being smuggled illegally to China, ultimately leading to the Opium Wars.

Apart from opium, other highly Duty-imposed and trade-restricted commodities, such as valuable spices, fine textiles, and precious metals, were often smuggled. The extensive coastline and the porous borders further facilitated these clandestine activities, laying the ground for the complex smuggling networks that wouldevolve in the 20th century.

1600: The establishment of the British East India Company began to influence South Asian trade.

The late 1600s: Early instances of smuggling of spices and textiles to evade taxes imposed by colonial powers.

1700s: Expansion of opium cultivation in Bengal and Bihar by the British East India Company.

1757: Battle of Plassey establishes British control over Bengal, facilitating large-scale opium production.

Late 1700s: Smuggling of precious metals, particularly silver, due to trade imbalances and restrictions.

1800s: Smuggling of Indian textiles to bypass British-imposed trade barriers.

1830s: Illegal salt trade due to British salt taxes, leading to local smuggling networks.

1839-1842: First Opium War between Britain and China, highlighting the scale of the opium trade.

1850s: Rise in human trafficking with South Asians being forcibly transported to colonies in the Caribbean and Africa as indentured laborers.

1856-1860: Second Opium War, further entrenching the opium trade and smuggling routes.

Late 1800s: Increased smuggling of arms and ammunition to support local resistance against British colonial rule.

Early 1900s: Continued smuggling of opium, textiles, and spices. Rise in human trafficking for labour in plantations across the British Empire.

1920s: Heightened smuggling of goods like tea and cloth to avoid colonial taxes.

1930s: Growth in the illegal wildlife trade, including ivory and exotic animals, driven by global demand.

1947: Partition of India and Pakistan, leading to increased smuggling across newly drawn borders, including arms, drugs, and humans.

While the two newly born nations faced several difficulties after partition in 1947, massive displacements of populations, and economic disruption, the smuggling networks took advantage of porous borders and swiftly moved into illegal transactions in gold, silver, textiles, and agricultural products. In the 1950s and 1960s, economic disparities and different tariff policies between the two countries created lucrative opportunities for smugglers. There were strong controls on gold in India, while in Pakistan the metal was freer, and smugglers' movements of the precious metal became widespread.

During the 1970s, political tensions and wars between India and Pakistan (notably in 1965 and 1971) exacerbated the problem. The conflicts disrupted legal trade and imposed strict restrictions on trade, making smuggling an even more attractive alternative. The 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, added another dimension to the regional smuggling networks, as the new country's unstable economy and porous borders became a new smuggling route for various goods.

The 1980s saw a significant rise in narcotics trafficking, with South Asia becoming a key transit route for heroin produced in Afghanistan. The Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) destabilized the region further, and Pakistan, sharing a long border with Afghanistan, became a major conduit for the drug trade. This period marked an increase in human trafficking, as economic hardships and lack of opportunities drove people to seek work abroad, often falling prey to traffickers.

In the 1990s, the liberalization of the Indian economy led to changes in trade policies yet smuggling persisted due to persistent economic disparities and corruption. Human trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation remained rampant, with traffickers exploiting poverty and lack of education. The advent of globalization and technological advancements further complicated efforts to curb these activities.

The early 2000s saw the rise of technology and cybercrime, adding new dimensions to smuggling and trafficking. Traffickers began using the internet and social media to recruit victims and coordinate their activities. Despite increased efforts by South Asian governments to address these issues, challenges such as corruption, inadequate law enforcement, and lack of regional cooperation continued to hinder effective action.

The narcotics trade has not declined in the recent past; heroin from Afghanistan is smuggled through Pakistan into India and beyond, sustaining multiple militant and criminal syndicates. Another acute issue is wildlife trafficking since South Asia has turned into a source and transit ground for endangered species and animal products. The illegal trade in counterfeit goods, including pharmaceuticals and electronics, holds serious economic and health risks.

Success stories of such efforts include cross-border agreements and joint operations against trafficking networks. Sustained regional cooperation, robust law enforcement, and comprehensive socio-economic reforms are needed to deal with the very roots of smuggling and human trafficking in South Asia. There are no easy answers to deeply entrenched problems and a

multidimensional approach is therefore called for: strengthening legal frameworks and border security, along with economic development, to reduce the vulnerability of populations to such exploitation.

II.Key definitions

South Asia for a long time was an important contender in the smuggling of goods andhumans. This is partially related to its strategic geographical position, extending coastlines and porous borders. The economic terrain, characterized by poverty at one extreme and rapid urbanization at the other, provides grounds for myriads of illegal activities. Historical factors related to the legacy of colonial trade routes, and the partition of British India in 1947 further entrenched these illicit networks. Added to this is the fact that political instability, economic disparities, and weak law enforcement, characteristic of the whole region, also intensify the problem, thereby making South Asia one of the major contenders in global smuggling and trafficking operations. Apart from their negative impacts on regional security and economic development, these activities have brought immense human suffering, especially to vulnerable groups. Below are a few key definitions which can be helpful throughout the committee:

Illicit Smuggling: The illegal transportation of goods or people across borders, evading customs and other regulations. This is a significant issue along the India-Pakistan border and the coastal regions such as the Bay of Bengal. Smuggled goods often include gold, electronics, and narcotics, with smugglers exploiting gaps in border security and corruption within enforcement agencies.

Human Trafficking: The illegal trade of humans for purposes such as forced labour, sexual exploitation, or other forms of coercion. This is particularly prevalent in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal, where traffickers prey on vulnerable populations, promising employment or education but delivering victims into conditions of modern slavery.

Porous Borders: Borders that are not strictly controlled or enforced, allowing for easy movement of people and goods. Examples include the India-Nepal and India-Bangladesh borders, which smugglers use to transport contraband goods and trafficked individuals with relative ease, bypassing official checkpoints.

Golden Crescent: A major opium-producing area in South Asia, encompassing parts of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. This region is a significant source of heroin, which is trafficked through Pakistan into India and other countries. The drug trade here finances various militant and criminal organizations, contributing to regional instability.

Forced Labor: A form of modern slavery where individuals are coerced to work under threats, violence, or other forms of coercion. This is common in industries such as brick kilns, agriculture, and domestic work in India and Pakistan, where trafficked individuals are often kept in inhumane conditions and denied their freedom.

Sex Trafficking: A form of human trafficking where individuals are forced or coerced into engaging in commercial sex acts. Major hubs for sex trafficking in South Asia include Mumbai, Kolkata, and Dhaka, where trafficked women and children are exploited in brothels and red-light districts.

Indentured Servitude: A system where individuals work without pay for a specific period in exchange for transportation, food, or shelter, often exploited by traffickers. Historically, South Asians were trafficked to the Caribbean and other colonies under this system, and modern variations continue in the form of bonded labour.

Counterfeit Goods: Products illegally manufactured and sold under a brand name without the brand owner's consent. Cities like Karachi, Mumbai, and Dhaka are major centers for the production and distribution of counterfeit goods which include pharmaceuticals, electronics, and luxury items, posing significant economic and health risks.

Wildlife Trafficking: The illegal capture, transport, and trade of animals and plants, often endangered species. This is prevalent in regions like the Sundarbans and the Western Ghats, where poachers capture tigers, rhinos, and other wildlife for sale in international markets, threatening biodiversity and conservation efforts.

Arms Smuggling: The illegal trade and transportation of weapons and ammunition across borders. This issue is acute in conflict zones like Kashmir and along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, where smuggled arms fuel insurgencies, terrorist activities, and organized crime.

Corruption: The abuse of entrusted power for private gain, often facilitating smuggling and trafficking operations. Corruption is widespread in customs and border enforcement agencies in South Asia, where officials may accept bribes to allow the passage of illegal goods and trafficked individuals.

Economic Disparities: Significant differences in income and wealth among different groups, often driving people into smuggling and trafficking. In South Asia, economic disparities are stark between rural and urban areas, pushing people from impoverished regions into the hands of traffickers or smugglers in search of better opportunities.

Transnational Crime: Criminal activities that cross national borders and involve multiple countries. In South Asia, transnational crimes include drug trafficking, human trafficking, and smuggling of goods, which require coordinated international efforts to address effectively.

Organised Crime: Criminal organizations that plan and conduct illegal activities on a large scale, often including smuggling and trafficking. Major cities like Mumbai, Karachi, and Colombo host powerful criminal networks that engage in drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking.

Border Security: Measures taken by a country to monitor and control its borders to prevent illegal activities such as smuggling. In South Asia, strengthening border security is critical in areas like the India-Bangladesh border and the Durand Line between Afghanistan and Pakistan to curb the flow of illegal goods and trafficked individuals.

Regional Cooperation: Collaborative efforts between neighbouring countries to address issues like smuggling and trafficking that affect the entire region. Initiatives by organizations like SAARC aim to foster cooperation in law enforcement, intelligence sharing, and border management to combat these transnational crimes.

Opium Wars: Conflicts in the 19th century between China and Western countries, particularly Britain, over the illegal opium trade. These wars have historical roots in British India, highlighting

the long-standing issues of drug smuggling in South Asia.

Migration: The movement of people from one place to another, which can be legal or illegal and is often exploited by traffickers. In South Asia, illegal migration routes are used by traffickers to transport people from Bangladesh and Nepal to India and beyond, often under presence and exploitative conditions.

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA): A U.S. law aimed at combating human trafficking and protecting victims. This act is often referenced in South Asian contexts for international cooperation and to establish frameworks for victim protection and legal action against traffickers.

Extradition: The legal process by which one country hands over a suspected or convicted criminal to another country for trial or punishment. This is important in addressing transnational smuggling and trafficking, with notable cases involving cooperation between India and neighbouring countries to bring traffickers and smugglers to justice.

III. Current situation

Since the early 2000s, South Asia has continued to grapple with significant challenges related to illicit smuggling and human trafficking. The region's strategic location and porous borders have perpetuated its role as a major transit route for heroin produced in Afghanistan. Post-2001, the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan disrupted local drug production temporarily, but instability in the region led to a resurgence in opium cultivation. By the mid-2000s, heroin smuggling through Pakistan and into India had intensified, contributing to rising addiction rates and funding various militant and criminal organizations.

Human trafficking has also remained a severe issue throughout the 2000s and 2010s. Economic disparities, coupled with rapid urbanization and migration, have made vulnerable populations in countries like India, Bangladesh, and Nepal prime targets for traffickers. Traffickers exploit these individuals with false promises of employment and education, only to coerce them into forced labour or sexual exploitation. Major urban centres such as Mumbai, Kolkata, and Dhaka have continued to be significant hubs for sex trafficking, with trafficked individuals often kept in deplorable conditions.

The rise of digital technology and the internet in the 2010s has added new complexities to smuggling and trafficking operations. Traffickers increasingly use social media platforms and online marketplaces to recruit victims and coordinate their activities, making detection and prevention more challenging for authorities. This digital shift has also facilitated the trade of counterfeit goods and illicit substances, further complicating enforcement efforts. Despite various government initiatives and international collaborations, the persistence of corruption, inadequate law enforcement resources, and limited regional cooperation have continued to hinder effective action against these illicit networks.

Efforts to combat these issues have seen some progress since the 2000s. Regional initiatives, such as those spearheaded by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), have aimed to enhance cooperation among member states to tackle transnational crimes. Countries like India and Bangladesh have enacted stricter anti-trafficking laws and launched awareness campaigns to protect vulnerable populations. However, sustained and coordinated efforts remain crucial. The complexity and scale of smuggling and trafficking in South Asia require a multi-faceted approach, including stronger legal frameworks, improved border security, and comprehensive socio-economic reforms to mitigate the root causes driving these illicit activities.

Timeline:

1971: The Bangladesh Liberation War leads to the creation of Bangladesh, resulting in increased smuggling of arms and human trafficking due to political instability and economic disruption.

1979: The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan begins, leading to a surge in opium production in the region and subsequent heroin trafficking through Pakistan.

1980s: The rise of the Golden Crescent as a major opium-producing area. Heroin trafficking intensifies, with routes established through Pakistan into India.

1985: The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is established, aiming to foster regional cooperation, including addressing cross-border crime.

1991: Economic liberalization in India increases disparities, leading to a rise in human trafficking as traffickers exploit vulnerable populations.

1996: The Taliban gained control in Afghanistan, leading to a temporary decline in opium production, but smuggling networks remain active.

1999: The Kargil War between India and Pakistan disrupts border security, leading to increased arms smuggling and human trafficking.

2001: The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan disrupts drug production temporarily, but instability leads to a resurgence in opium cultivation.

2002: SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution is adopted, highlighting regional commitment to addressing human trafficking.

2005: India enacts the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act to combat child trafficking and exploitation.

2006: India and Pakistan initiate the Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism, aiming to enhance cooperation against terrorism and related crimes, including smuggling.

2010: The rise of digital technology and social media complicates trafficking and smuggling operations, making it easier for traffickers to recruit and coordinate.

2013: Bangladesh enacts the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act to strengthen legal frameworks against human trafficking.

2015: Nepal earthquake exacerbates vulnerabilities, leading to a spike in human trafficking as traffickers exploit displaced populations.

2016: Demonetization in India disrupts cash flows, temporarily affecting smuggling networks but fails to eliminate them.

2017: The Rohingya refugee crisis leads to increased human trafficking and smuggling of refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh and beyond.

2020: The COVID-19 pandemic disrupts global supply chains but shifts some smuggling operations online, increasing digital trafficking.

2021: Taliban retakes control of Afghanistan, causing concerns about a resurgence in opium production and heroin trafficking through South Asia.

2022: India and Bangladesh enhance border security cooperation to curb cross-border smuggling and trafficking.

2023: Regional initiatives, such as those by SAARC, focus on enhancing intelligence sharing and joint operations against transnational crime networks

2024: Ongoing efforts by South Asian governments and international organizations to combat illicit smuggling and human trafficking continue, with emphasis on stronger legal frameworks, border security, and socio-economic reforms to address root causes.

IV. Country-Specific Information

Russia: Russia's historical involvement in illicit smuggling is deeply intertwined with its geopolitical strategies, extensive arms industry, and periods of political upheaval. The Cold War era saw the Soviet Union supplying arms to allied governments and insurgent groups in South Asia, significantly contributing to the proliferation of small arms in the region. Notably, Soviet support during the Soviet-Afghan War led to a massive influx of weapons, many of which found their way into illicit markets.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the region experienced an even greater surge in illegal arms trade. The disintegration of the Soviet state left a surplus of military-grade weapons, which were often sold or smuggled to conflict zones, including those in South Asia. Russian organized crime groups took advantage of the chaotic transition, establishing networks that trafficked arms and other contraband across the globe, further entrenching their influence in the illicit trade.

In contemporary times, Russia remains one of the largest exporters of conventional weapons, with countries like India as major customers. However, concerns persist regarding the diversion of these arms to non-state actors and the black market. Russian criminal networks also play a significant role in global money laundering, with illicit financial flows reaching South Asia through intricate schemes involving shell companies and offshore accounts. Moreover, Russia is a source and transit country for human trafficking, with Russian criminal organizations collaborating with counterparts in South Asia to facilitate trafficking routes and operations.

Cambodia: The Government of Cambodia does not fully meet the minimum standards for eliminating trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so; therefore, Cambodia remained in Tier 3. Despite the lack of substantial efforts, the government took some steps to address trafficking, including opening victim support centres, cooperating with foreign governments on anti-trafficking investigations, and launching an online trafficking victim identification training course available to government officials. However, corruption and official complicity – including by high-level senior government officials – in trafficking crimes remained widespread and endemic during the reporting period; this included the exploitation of tens of thousands of victims in forced criminality in online scam operations in Cambodia.

The government maintained inadequate law enforcement efforts; official complicity remained a

significant concern. The 2008 Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation criminalised sex trafficking and labour trafficking and prescribed penalties of seven to 15 years imprisonment for offences involving an adult victim and 15 to 20 years imprisonment for those involving a child victim; these penalties were sufficiently stringent and, concerning sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. NGOs reported that in practice the government did not issue criminal penalties under the anti-trafficking law for labour traffickers

Traffickers often lure foreign victims to Cambodia with false job offers, only to subject them to forced detention and criminality. Brokers move victims through airports, overland, or by sea into Cambodia. Traffickers subject these workers to punishment for poor performance and disobedience, including, but not limited to, physical abuse and torture, sexual abuse, pay docking, and debt bondage, and may "resell" those who cannot meet sales quotas or repay recruitment debts to other criminal networks for forced labour in similar fraud schemes, domestic servitude, or sex trafficking. NGOs estimate as many as 100,000 workers are exploited in forced labour in these compounds in Cambodia, noting the number is likely conservative. These compounds are largely clustered in the port city of Sihanoukville, an SEZ under a Belt and Road Initiative agreement between Cambodia and the PRC, but there are dozens of additional compounds throughout Cambodia, primarily along the borders with Thailand and Laos. In response to the Cambodian government's August 2022 operation to target and investigate these online scam operation compounds, traffickers moved from Sihanoukville to more rural areas, including to other PRC-invested SEZs, where they encountered less scrutiny by the government and NGOs and victims have less chance of escape. Media and civil society reporting indicate compounds have consolidated and returned in full force to Sihanoukville and other locations along the Cambodia-Thailand border by the end of 2023.

Indonesia: The Government of Indonesia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period; therefore, Indonesia remained in Tier 2. These efforts included increasing investigations, prosecutions, and convictions for suspected trafficking crimes; investigating a labour trafficking case in the fishing sector; supporting an increased number of trafficking victims, including hundreds of Indonesian forced labour victims exploited in online scam operations; and cooperating with a foreign government to address one online scam operation based in Indonesia.

However, the government continued to not fully prioritize the staffing or funding for effective oversight of the fishing industry, despite long-standing, pervasive trafficking concerns. The government made limited efforts to investigate allegations of exploitation in People's Republic of China (PRC)-affiliated industrial parks. Corruption and official complicity in trafficking continued to impede anti-trafficking efforts, particularly in the fishing, palm oil, and extractive industries. The government continued to lack a national SOP to identify trafficking victims in all sectors, which continued to hinder proactive victim identification, especially of men and boys.

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Indonesia and exploit Indonesians abroad. Each of Indonesia's 38 provinces is a source and destination of trafficking. Traffickers use unscrupulous recruitment agents and sub-agents, retention of identity documents, and threats of violence to keep migrants in forced labour. Indonesian migrant workers often assume debts both Indonesian and overseas recruitment agents exploit to coerce and retain their labour. Labor traffickers exploit many Indonesians through force or debt-based coercion in Asia (particularly the PRC, ROK, and Singapore) and the Middle East (particularly Saudi Arabia) in domestic work, factories, construction, and manufacturing; on Malaysian oil palm plantations; and fishing vessels. Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Middle East host many Indonesian domestic workers who are not fully protected under local labour laws and experience trafficking indicators, including excessive

working hours, lack of formal contracts, physical abuse, and unpaid wages; many of these workers come from the province of East Nusa Tenggara. The government estimates more than two million of the six to eight million Indonesians working abroad – many of whom are women in domestic work – are undocumented or have expired visas, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation.

Thailand: Thailand serves as a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. Labour and sex traffickers exploit women, men, LGBTQ+ individuals, and children from various countries. The COVID-19 pandemic initially decreased the demand for trafficking victims but resulted in increased vulnerability for those exposed. Victimization worsened due to the pandemic's financial impact, and children from families that lost employment became increasingly at risk of trafficking. Trafficking networks are supported by corrupt officials, and employers exploit workers in various industries using debt-based coercion and deceptive recruitment practices, as well as other means. Vessel owners, brokers and senior crew subject men and boys to forced labour on fishing boats, without adequate food, water, or medical supplies. Thailand also serves as a transit hub for people trafficked into cyber-scam operations in neighbouring countries.

Thailand is a major transit point for arms trafficking, as weapons often pass through the country to reach Myanmar – where they are used by ethnic armed groups and criminals. Thailand is also a destination country for arms from Cambodia. The country is also becoming a source of firearms due to the proliferation of online black markets, making it easy to access illicit handguns. Despite strict gun laws, licenses can be purchased from corrupt officials, and discounted firearms are sold on the black market. The lack of commitment to countering arms trafficking is due in part to the involvement of many members of the security establishment. Thailand is also known for its expertise in firearm modification and craft production, which is being shared on social media and is spreading to neighbouring countries. Thailand ranks first in Southeast Asia in terms of civilian gun possession, with less than half of those guns being authorised. This has led to an increase in violence on the streets, including turf wars among street gangs

Thailand is a transit and destination country for the heroin trade in Southeast Asia, with the Golden Triangle area being heavily used for drug trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Thailand has eliminated opium farming and heroin production, the latter continues in neighbouring Myanmar, with heroin and other drugs often being smuggled through Laos to Thailand and onwards. Corruption among officials in Thailand contributes to the heroin trade, and local heroin use has contributed to significant public health concerns, particularly to the transmission of HIV and other blood-borne viruses. Thailand's cocaine trafficking market is moderate and is dominated by international players and networks rather than domestic groups

Vietnam: For more than two decades, Vietnam has been a source, destination, and transit country for human trafficking. Women and children from ethnic minority groups and economically disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly vulnerable. While the Vietnamese government claims to prioritise combatting human trafficking, it does not comply with the minimum international standards to fight this crime. Rather, Vietnam is a major source country for trafficking women, especially underage girls, with Vietnamese women heavily represented in the regional and global sex industries. Criminal actors involved include local recruitment agencies, family members and acquaintances of victims, and foreign actors such as Chinese and Korean 'bride recruitment' brokers. Criminals are increasingly professional, and form closed interprovincial, transnational, and international networks. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, human trafficking has worsened in Vietnam as illicit activities have become harder to detect and Vietnamese are reported to be exploited for forced criminality in scam compounds across Southeast Asia.

Human trafficking is also a significant issue in Vietnam, particularly along its borders with Cambodia. Many Vietnamese citizens use smugglers to seek economic opportunities in China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and Europe. Human smuggling hotspots, such as Nghe An province, receive millions of dollars in

remittances annually. However, economic difficulties have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to reports of pregnant women crossing the border into China with the help of cross-border smuggling networks and reportedly selling their babies.

Vietnam's arms trafficking market is moderate compared to other countries, but it still serves as a potential source, destination, and transit point, especially in border areas with China and Cambodia. Illicit arms manufacturing is reportedly on the rise in some regions, particularly in complex security areas like Hanoi, Hai Phong, and Ho Chi Minh City. This trend is partly due to the growing use of cyberspace, including social media and e-commerce, which make it difficult for authorities to detect and address crime. Mafia-style groups mainly sell arms in Ho Chi Minh City, while foreign buyers, particularly Chinese and Cambodian nationals, often engage as buyers. For poor agricultural families in northern and south-eastern Vietnam, arms trafficking reportedly constitutes a significant source of income.

Although the country's heroin trade is not among the largest in the world, heroin remains a major drug market within Vietnam, with consumption occurring throughout the country. It is often transported using small transport mechanisms, with the trade facilitated by corrupt government and border officials in rural borderland provinces. The criminal actors involved in this trade include domestic and transnational criminal networks, particularly those from China and Korea, which frequently come to Vietnam to traffic drugs. While Vietnam was once a historical poppy cultivator, there is currently little to no poppy cultivation reported in the country. The demand for heroin remains high, even though methamphetamine has become the most used drug in recent years.

India: India faces a serious issue of gun violence in many states. Despite having strict laws for firearms, there are many loopholes where criminals and normal citizens acquire guns. Reasons can be many from portraying themselves as powerful to threatening someone or to protecting and even killing someone. Few surveys have revealed that the numbers of licensed firearms are very low compared to unlicensed firearms. The government and police have taken severe measures to bring an end to the gun culture, but corruption and politics have given hope to the culprits. States like Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh are the worst affected regions. Art and culture such as the music industry have witnessed the glorification of guns through music videos and lyrics by many singers and artists. Thus, this chapter tries to bring out this situation, reasons, and solutions for the prevailing evil form of gun culture in India.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, in the year 2018, a total of 74,877 firearms were seized, out of which 3,742 arms were licensed/factory-made, while 71,135 arms were unlicensed/improvised/crude/country-made.[1] The incessant demand for weapons in India proliferated over the years due to the low-intensity conflicts in Northeast India, Left-Wing extremism-affected areas, and Jammu and Kashmir. An unhindered inflow of small arms from different routes eventually reaches the insurgents, Maoists, terrorists, and other criminals. The illicit manufacture of local country-made guns, stealing from government stocks, and inadequate monitoring and surveillance have further aggravated the situation. The Indian subcontinent is particularly vulnerable to this menace of contraband arms smuggling. Many reasons can be attributed to this vulnerability. Afghanistan-Pakistan region in the subcontinent arguably contains the world's largest concentration of illicit weapons. Also, the region is host to two of the largest opium-producing corridors, namely the 'Golden Triangle' and the 'Golden Crescent'. The most prominent example of smuggling of contraband arms and weapons in India is from Yunnan province in China to the insurgent groups of Northeast India via Myanmar.

Sri Lanka: Human trafficking remains a growing problem in Sri Lanka, particularly for workers who are forced into labour in other countries. These workers are typically employed in the construction, garment, and domestic service sectors in various parts of the world, such as the Middle East, Asia,

Europe, and the United States. In addition to forced labour, cases of sexual exploitation and child sex tourism have also been reported, with the latter showing a rise in recent years. Increasing numbers of Sri Lankans, who leave their country due to the continuing instability there, end up vulnerable to human trafficking in destination countries.

Sri Lanka is not only a source but also a transit country for human smuggling. Due to factors like the country's political instability, economic crisis, inflation, and shortages of essential goods, many Sri Lankans are being smuggled to Australia, the Middle East, the UK, and Canada. Female domestic workers from Sri Lanka are primarily travelling to the Middle East and Europe, often through false job contracts and employment offers. Sri Lanka is also frequently used as a transit point for smuggled individuals, often from Africa and the Middle East, who are destined for Southeast Asia or the Pacific region.

Local businessmen, politicians, and their supporters are driving the demand for illicit arms in Sri Lanka. The current supply of illegal arms is not a result of significant inflows of illegal weapons, but rather of wartime weapons ending up in the hands of criminal networks. Arms trafficking is believed to occur primarily in Puttalam, Kalmunai in the Ampara district, and Ikirigollewa in Medawachchiya, where locals allegedly smuggle arms while trading dried fish.

Counterfeiting is an emerging criminal market in Sri Lanka, affecting various industries such as consumer goods and medical equipment. The sale of counterfeit goods results in lost revenue and jobs, and reputational damage. The current financial crisis and consequent shortages of essential goods have further exacerbated the spread of counterfeit and substandard products, particularly through online platforms.

Sri Lanka is a transit country for heroin mostly originating from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, destined for Europe. Heroin is also the most widely abused drug in Sri Lanka, making the country a significant destination in the global trade. Recent open-ocean seizures of heroin indicate a rise in maritime trafficking of the drug, sourced from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

Due to its porous borders, Sri Lanka is predominantly a transit country for the regional cocaine trade (especially in liquefied form), although the COVID-19 pandemic and disruptions in air travel have somewhat impacted this transit route. The market for cocaine is smaller than other criminal markets in Sri Lanka, with profits accrued to domestic actors and demand stemming mainly from the local nightlife scene. Criminal gangs have been masking cocaine shipments to Australia and Europe in Sri Lankan containers.

V. Points a resolution should address

Preamble Clauses:

Acknowledging the Problem:

- Recognizing the severe impact of illicit smuggling of guns, weapons, humans, and money laundering on the stability, security, and socio-economic development of South Asia.
- Recalling relevant United Nations resolutions and international agreements aimed at combating illicit smuggling and money laundering.
- Noting the cross-border nature of these crimes and the necessity for regional and international cooperation.

Highlighting the Consequences:

- Stressing the humanitarian impact of human trafficking, including exploitation, abuse, and loss of human rights.
- Emphasizing the role of illicit arms and weapons in fueling violence, terrorism, and armed conflicts.
- Considering the economic impact of money laundering on legitimate economies and its facilitation of other illicit activities.

Operative Clauses:

Strengthening Legal Frameworks:

- Urging member states to adopt and enforce comprehensive laws against illicit smuggling and money laundering.
- Encouraging harmonization of legal definitions and penalties to facilitate international cooperation.

Enhancing Border Control and Security:

- Calling for increased investment in border security measures, including advanced technology and training for border officials.
- Promoting the establishment of joint border patrols and information-sharing mechanisms between neighboring countries.
- **Improving International and Regional Cooperation:**
- Recommending the creation of a regional task force to coordinate efforts against illicit smuggling and money laundering.
- Suggest regular meetings and intelligence-sharing agreements between South Asian countries and international organizations.

Addressing Root Causes:

- Advocating for socio-economic development programs in vulnerable communities to reduce the allure of illicit activities.
- Supporting education and awareness campaigns to inform the public about the dangers and signs of human trafficking and money laundering.
- **Protecting and Supporting Victims:**
- Proposing the establishment of support centers for victims of human trafficking, offering medical, psychological, and legal assistance.

- Ensuring that victims of trafficking are not criminalized and are provided with pathways to rehabilitation and reintegration.

Enhancing Financial Monitoring and Regulation:

- Recommending the implementation of stricter financial regulations and monitoring systems to detect and prevent money laundering.
- Encouraging banks and financial institutions to adopt robust Know Your Customer (KYC) policies and report suspicious activities.

Promoting Public-Private Partnerships:

- Encouraging collaboration between governments, businesses, and civil society to combat illicit smuggling and money laundering.
- Supporting initiatives by private companies to enhance supply chain transparency and integrity.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Calling for the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of anti-smuggling and anti-money laundering initiatives.
- Recommending periodic reviews and updates of strategies based on the latest data and trends.

Role of Nonstate Actors:

- Recognizing the contributions of organizations like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) Container Program in combating illicit smuggling and drug seizures.
- Encouraging collaboration with non-state actors to leverage their expertise and resources in addressing these issues.

Intergovernmental Associations:

- Supporting the efforts of intergovernmental associations in providing aid and preventing transnational substance trafficking.
- Promoting the establishment of frameworks for information exchange and cooperative enforcement actions.

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