



| STUDY GUIDE

UNODC

United Nations Office on drugs and crime

**Internacional cooperation in response to the
expansion of illegal mining and illicit economies**





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LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

1. Letter from the Secretary General

Dear delegates and faculty advisors of PUCP MUN 2025,

It is an honor to address you as the Secretary-General of the 14th edition of PUCP MUN 2025. Over the past seven years of participating in Model United Nations, taking on various roles and engaging at both national and international levels, I have had the privilege of experiencing the transformation these events bring to young people. This experience has given me a unique perspective on MUN: they are one of the most powerful tools for youth education and empowerment, more than we often realize. MUN has changed my life, offering me the chance to enhance my leadership, public speaking, and teamwork skills, as well as gain a deep understanding of international issues. This long but rewarding journey has now led me to the honor of leading the biggest conference in the country, with the primary goal of providing you with a unique and formative experience at all levels.

For this edition, we have managed to bring together more than **1,000 participants**, and through great effort, we have established valuable connections with the United Nations and other international organizations. With the support of **Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú**, this conference is grounded on three fundamental pillars: academic and organizational excellence, decentralization, and the formative experience we offer.

From my perspective, we have identified three key issues that will guide this conference. First, closing educational gaps to provide an accessible space for all students. Second, bringing the Model United Nations closer to the real work of the United Nations. And third, placing the human factor at the center of discussions, recognizing that behind every committee and every debate are human lives directly impacted by the issues we address.

I deeply thank the team that has made this edition possible, as well as **PUCP** for its unwavering support. To you, delegates and participants, I assure you that you will experience a journey filled with learning and personal growth during **PUCP MUN 2025**. We eagerly await your participation and hope that you make the most of this opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Micaela Loza Rivera".

Micaela Loza Rivera
Secretary-General of PUCP MUN 2025



COMMITTEE GUIDE

2. Introduction to the committee

Created in 1997 as a result of the merger of the United Nations Center for International Crime Prevention with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime emerged as a response to the increasing concern of the State members of the UN towards the issue of criminality, drug trafficking, and terrorism.

UNODC's authority allowed it to work directly with governments and international organizations. In that sense, UNODC promotes programs with an approach centered on the needs of each State, supporting these programs in proactive, centered, and effective initiatives.

UNODC's organizational structure is based on four pillars: division for operations, division for treaty affairs, division for policy analysis and public affairs and division for management.

History and achievements

a. Creation of UNODC Southern Africa

In 1997, UNODC Southern Africa was created with the purpose of focusing solely on addressing terrorism and criminal activities in countries from Southern Africa, such as Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

b. UNODC cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran (1999 - 2010)

After the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNODC offered technical assistance on drugs and crime under the framework of NOROUZ. In 2005, their plan shifted to focus more on the reduction of drug supplies and developing effective measures to prevent, treat, and rehabilitate those who abuse drugs and/or have been infected with HIV/AIDS.

Most of the campaigns organized in this country were financed by the donations of European countries.

c. Detention centers and prisons

The creation of detaining centers and prisons in some countries in order to detain people charged with terrorism offences and other criminal offences has been very successful in countries such as Kazakhstan, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Every few years, UNODC reevaluates the needs of these centers and proposes solutions.

The Main Areas of UNODC

a. Combating drugs

UNODC has focused its efforts on drug control conventions and policies. It has also aimed to provide treatment and rehabilitation centers, as well as enhancing international cooperation.

b. Addressing organized crime, combating terrorism and promoting criminal justice

UNODC has aimed to dismantle transnational criminal networks involving human trafficking, smuggling of immigrants, cybercrime, and illicit financial activities. On the other hand, UNODC has also enhanced the capacity of law enforcement agencies and provided technical assistance to counter the financing of terrorism. To accomplish this goal, they support the development of legal frameworks, provide technical assistance to improve access to justice, and support alternative mechanisms and rehabilitation programs.

c. Countering corruption

UNODC assists member states in implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption and developing comprehensive anti-corruption strategies, as well as assisting in the recovery of stolen assets and supporting efforts to prevent money laundering and illicit financial flows. UNODC promotes integrity, ethics, and good governance.

3. Historical Background

Mining has been part of human development for millions of years, with the first Homo Sapiens searching for the best stones to use as tools for their survival. Once humanity became less nomadic and grew communities, minerals were used to create new tools or were valued by their beauty, which led them to become one of the first things to be traded and have value on their own (Earth Systems, 2018).

As humanity developed, the need for more complex minerals became stronger. Approximately 6,000 years ago, mining to acquire coal was very common, as well as the smelting of metals such as gold, silver, and copper. This can be appreciated in most of the ancient relics.

With the development of bigger civilizations, mining became one of the most critical industries. In Europe, governments would offer miners extensive rights to the land and extraction activities as long as they donated some of those minerals to the government. Later on, with the surge of the Industrial Era, the mining industry developed into the mining industry we have today.

1. General Mining Act of 1872

Although it is not the first legal regulation about mining, it became one of the most important ones in the United States of America. It governs metals such as gold, silver, platinum, and copper; however, it does not cover fuel minerals. Its effects are still present nowadays, and it has been heavily criticized for many of its flaws. Firstly, it excludes miners from paying taxes. Secondly, it is environmentally inadequate (Earth Works, 2019).

2. Mining and colonialism

Mining was a core element of colonialism. Colonialists saw the new territories as unlimited resources to exploit, not considering the long-term effects. There was no care towards the environment, and those communities that lived in areas where there were plenty of minerals were displaced or forced to work for almost no payment. (McQuade, 2019). The exploitation of indigenous communities was a common practice.

One of the biggest industries was the rubber industry, which was usually extracted from the Amazon rainforest, the Malay peninsula and Eastern Asia. Those who colonized and who remained after the colonization had to cut down long portions of the rainforests in order to extract the precious materials. Native people from those countries were forced to work in awful conditions, leading them to illnesses and death. Moreover, some animal species, such as Malayan tigers, became critically endangered.

In Africa and America, colonialism aimed to extract precious minerals such as gold, silver, and diamonds. The conditions people worked in were devastating, leading easily to their deaths. Although colonialism ended many years ago, some countries are still facing some challenges with some powerful countries and international private companies trying to take advantage of them. For example, Liberia offered a U.S. company a 99-year lease on a million acres of land to be used for rubber plantations and which was granted in 1926, and this has affected their economy drastically.

4. Introduction to the topic:

Problem definition

Before and after the General Mining Act of 1872, almost every State regulated mining laws. However, some of these mining laws have strong limitations towards miners, such as charging additional taxes to miners and/or asking for yearly inspections in their work area with strict sanctions towards those miners who don't fulfill all the requisites to operate. This happens because mining is a very controversial economic activity: its impact on the environment is damaging and difficult to repair, sometimes, nearly impossible (INTERPOL, 2025). Additionally, its impact on communities is usually very negative, generating struggles among communities and the government.

However, even though countries have aimed to reduce these negative impacts by regulating mining activities, large parts of the sector remain informal or illegal (INTERPOL, 2022), creating opportunities for criminal groups to exploit people and create irreversible damage to the environment. Artisanal and small-scale mining often operates outside the law in order to avoid complying with all the requirements that legal mining requires. When we refer to illegal mining, we not only allude to the mining extract per se, but the definition also includes trafficking the minerals, so it is necessary that States exercise strong control of international borders, especially in those countries in which illegal mining is especially strong.

As we mentioned before, illegal mining has an important and negative effect on the environment: it can result in land degradation to an irreversible limit, pollution of water and soil, deforestation, and extinction of flora and fauna (United Nations, 2025). The environmental effect also reaches communities, for example, when chemicals and wastes are poured into lakes or rivers, or when the soil is too damaged to resume agricultural or livestock breeding, forcing people to displace, as well as increasing their risk of becoming ill and even facing death. As a result, it is also very common that people reject even licit mining activities, causing a strong conflict involving the government, the mining companies, and communities. Consequently, mining companies face even more issues when they are willing to enter the licit market, demotivating small or artisanal miners.

Illicit economies derived from illegal mining

However, small and artisan miners are a small concern in comparison to criminal organizations. Illegal mining has developed into an endemic and lucrative enterprise in several regions, causing a strong environmental impact, as we have stated previously. Nevertheless, when we talk about criminal organizations, it is also very concerning the impact it has on people living in the area: many of them face forced labour, human trafficking, child and women abuse and/or sexual violence, human displacements, and health issues for those surrounding the area (INTERPOL, 2022).

However, one of the biggest struggles for governments to eradicate this illicit mining market is the reluctance of those who directly benefit from it. Sadly, illegal mining is one of the most profitable economies since no taxes are paid, and there are no limits to the minerals that can be extracted, nor regulations on how to extract them without causing irreversible damage to the environment. Moreover, some countries require big mining companies to offer some economic benefits to communities that may be affected due to the extraction and processing of minerals. However, when illegal miners work, they don't accomplish these requirements, which reduces the economic investment and increases their profit.

Due to the illicit mining working outside of the legal framework, governments lose millions of dollars every year as taxes are not paid, but also because governments invest a lot of money trying to prevent these illicit economies and to compensate for all the damages they generate.

5. Key terms

- a. **Minerals:** Any kind of inorganic substance in a solid state that possesses a stable chemical composition, a defined structure that varies slightly. They can be found in their natural state or may need human intervention to be purified.
- b. **Mining activities:** It is an economic sector that works in order to extract, process, and trade minerals that can be found in the soil. This activity has a strong impact on many countries' economies.
- c. **Mineral deposit:** The mineral mass that is extracted from a mining site.
- d. **Illegal mining:** Consists of any kind of mining activity done illegally. It is an umbrella term that covers illegal extraction, trade of minerals, and the use of toxic chemicals (such as cyanide and mercury) in mining activities.
 - I. **Environmental crimes:** Illegal activities harming the environment, such as deforestation, excessive fishing and/or hunting, or extraction of minerals, among others. It is usually aimed to benefit a small group of individuals or companies through the exploitation and theft of, or trade in natural resources.
 - II. **Illicit economies:** It is a system of economic activities that are illegal and, therefore, hidden from official oversight. They include the trade, production, sale, and offer of prohibited goods and/or services.
 - III. **Organized crime:** A group of three or more people that acts in concert to commit at least one serious crime to obtain any type of benefit, such as economic or political.
 - IV. **Human trafficking:** It is an illicit behaviour which involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring and receipt of people by means such as force, fraud, deception and abuse of power, with the aim of exploiting them.
 - V. **Forced labor:** It happens when individuals are forced to provide work or service through the use of force, fraud or coercion with little to no economic retribution.

6. Past actions

a. UNODC actions to tackle illegal mining and mineral trafficking

A central point of UNODC actions to eradicate illegal mining is through research and global analysis of regions that are more likely to host illegal miners due to the lack of

regulation and the amount of minerals found in said places. UNODC recognizes the need to enhance international cooperation and has provided a specific framework on this matter. The Environment Team coordinates the UNODC response with the Inter-Divisional Task Team on Minerals Trafficking to leverage all available expertise to offer technical assistance focused on the needs of the Member States involved (UNODC, 2025).

In addition to those measures, in order to tackle down illicit economies, illicit financial flows and money laundering, UNODC also provides operational tools, legal assistance and cross-sector partnerships with other UN bodies such as INTERPOL or the World Bank.

b. INTERPOL initiatives on the matter

INTERPOL (International Criminal Police Organization) is a relevant actor in the fight against illegal mining. This happens because, as we have mentioned before, illegal mining is related to criminal organizations and trafficking, which is where this organization has a strong authority. INTERPOL works with members to detect, disrupt, and dismantle the criminal networks behind illegal mining (INTERPOL, 2025). To achieve this, it provides capacity building and training, relying on international cooperation. Moreover, it strengthens law enforcement agencies to track down criminal organisations.

As for now, INTERPOL is focused on the project GAIA as a response to climate change and loss of biodiversity, and their most recent operations have been the following: Clean Gold Programme (Brazil), Operation Sanu (Central Africa), and Operation Aurum (Nigeria).

7. Case studies

a. Africa: Sahel region

Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Chad, and Niger) are some of the largest gold producers in Africa: in 2021, it was estimated that they produced 228 tons of gold, worth over 12.6 billion dollars. Out of that number, it is also estimated that 108 tons of gold are produced by artisanal and small-scale gold mining (UNODC, 2023). Barriers to accessing mining licences often push these artisanal miners into a spiral of illegality, from where it is easier for them to be controlled by transnational organized crime groups, including extremely violent groups.

Burkina Faso and Mali are the countries that produce the most gold, whereas Niger is the one that produces the least. It is also remarkable to mention that Chad doesn't offer any data about their gold production. On the other hand, the UAE is the country that imports the most gold from this region, followed by Switzerland, although the difference between the kilograms of gold imported by both countries is very wide.

Trafficking in this area is very easy as criminal organisations work on a regional level, effectively avoiding border control. Furthermore, the constant struggles among armed

groups to dominate this area generate tensions that develop in tensions and political struggles.

To make things worse, the lack of regulation on artisanal and small mining companies often boosts the violation of human rights, especially against those who live in poor conditions: they are more likely to end up being exploited or working in inhumane conditions. Last but not least, the environmental impact is very strong: the use of toxic chemicals such as mercury and cyanide provokes illnesses in those who have less resources to access clean water or attend a medical center.

It has also been stated that even international companies regulated by their origin countries' laws and the governments of the States part of the region are also involved in corrupt activities.

b. Latin America: Peru

Peru is a country located in South America, and it is mainly composed of the Amazon rainforest and the Andes mountains. Both areas are important for the mining industry due to the large amount of minerals and fuels that can be extracted from them. As a fact, Peru's economy is highly dependent on mineral extraction, especially copper and gold. Nonetheless, the country faces a very strong issue: the increasing number of informal (artisanal and small) and illegal (criminal organizations) miners (San Martín, 2022). Although the country has created a strong framework to sanction illegal miners and promote the formalization of informal miners, it is still a very strong issue in the region.

The environmental effects are devastating: large areas of the Amazon rainforest have been deforested, and many animals have become endangered. Also, as a result of the lack of regulation, rivers have become polluted, making anyone who depends on that water prone to becoming ill. In addition, there have been many reports indicating that these illegal mining companies have caused oil leaks that destroy the natural flora and fauna of the region.

Furthermore, people in those regions often face violations of their human rights. There have been reports of human trafficking and forced labour. Women and children face a higher risk of abuse, and indigenous communities face illnesses as a result of the pollution of the environment. Many of those who have tried to stop these illegal miners as activists have been killed.

UNODC has been working with the Peruvian government to strengthen the national criminal justice system in order to improve the investigation and prosecution of forest crimes.

c. Asia: Myanmar

Myanmar is currently facing a civil war as a result of a military coup in 2021. This has forced the government's interests to shift away from the fight against organised crime, which has increased drastically in the country. Nowadays, Myanmar has become the center of criminality, lacking countering mechanisms towards illicit trade (Brown, 2025). This has become a very concerning issue since Myanmar is now extracting REE minerals (rare earth elements) such as neodymium and europium, and recent studies revealed that the companies that are extracting such minerals are criminal organisations involving armed groups.

Since the coup, more than 245 new mining sites have been established in the country, the majority of which are not regulated and easily become captured by illegal mining companies. The results on the environment are outrageous: the extraction of such complex minerals requires the use of highly toxic chemicals, which are then poured on rivers or even on the soil. Consequently, local populations are exposed to health risks, and biodiversity is devastated (UNODC, 2025).

Another factor that has exposed Myanmar to this situation is the lack of border control: the government is not focused on controlling the entrance or exit of people, since, due to the civil war, there has been an increasing exodus of people.

Although it has not been mentioned as part of the cases studied, we encourage delegates to research the exploitation of oil, as it also generates tensions between States and armed groups, and its impact on the environment is highly damaging.

8. QARMAs

- a. What mechanisms can enhance information-sharing and law enforcement coordination among States affected by transnational illicit economies?
- b. In what ways can anti-corruption frameworks be strengthened to prevent the infiltration of illicit mining networks into political and financial institutions?
- c. What role should private companies and international markets play in ensuring accountability within global supply chains linked to illegal mining?
- d. To what extent should illicit mining be treated primarily as an environmental crime, an economic issue, or a matter of organized criminal activity?
- e. How can development programs offer sustainable economic alternatives to communities dependent on illegal mining without generating new social inequalities?
- f. How might regional organizations complement UNODC efforts in promoting collective security and environmental protection against illegal mining activities?

9. Position Paper Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of each delegation's position, its potential solutions, and its role within the committee. Delegates are encouraged to follow a structured format when drafting their documents, which will facilitate the writing process and improve readability for the Director. Furthermore, to be eligible for an award, each delegate must submit a Position Paper by the deadline.

In the first paragraph, you should state your country's position on the issue, clearly demonstrating an understanding of your country's policy. In the second paragraph, you may mention the main previous UN actions related to the issue. You should analyze the impact these actions have had on your country, explaining why they were successful or unsuccessful. You may also include actions taken by other international organizations and by your own country on the issue.

In the final and most important paragraph, you should present your proposals for addressing the problem. Each proposal must be supported by detailed information, covering the who, what, when, where, and how of implementation. Regarding the format, the document should be a maximum of one page, with 1.15 line spacing, Times New Roman font, size 11, and 2.5 cm margins on all sides. Remember that all references must be properly cited. It should be sent to: positionpaperspucpmun@gmail.com.

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CERRANDO BRECHAS

