

Course on

ILLICIT MARKETS AND ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE AMERICAS



Class

Regional Cooperation Mechanisms (Americas) against Organized Crime and Illicit Markets

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Introduction

In this class, we will analyze the Regional Cooperation Mechanisms against Organized Crime and Illicit Markets.

We will address three thematic focuses related to these Regional Mechanisms: Regional Cooperation Commitments in the fight against corruption and the strengthening of Justice Systems; the Regional Mechanisms for the implementation of cooperation and assistance programs in the fight against crime; and, finally, Regional Cooperation initiatives in the fight against cybercrime.



Institutions

European Union: it is an economic and political union of 27 European Member States to promote regional cooperation in various aspects of public life;

OAS: the Organization of American States is the oldest regional cooperation institution in the world, founded in 1948 to promote common policies in the American continent;

UNODC: the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that promotes cooperation and research initiatives on the transnational drug trafficking topic;

MERCOSUL: it is the organization for economic cooperation between four countries in South America, promoting a common economic market;

AMERIPOL: The Police Community of the Americas comprises 35 law enforcement agencies or similar institutions and more than 30 observer organizations in the American continent.

Class Content

Organized crime is the main threat to multidimensional security, as it undermines **border policies, control strategies and State-nation control methods**. The transnationalization of organized crime increases its profitability and thus contaminates politics and the economy. To fight it, regional cooperation mechanisms against transnational organized crime and illicit markets are essential.

The main challenges for the success of regional cooperation initiatives are: **reducing bureaucracy, digitizing and operationalizing cooperation between security and intelligence agencies at the continental level**.



Class Content

The commitments of regional cooperation in the fight against corruption and the strengthening of justice systems refer to multilateral declarations, mainly:

The Declaration of Lima, adopted as a consequence of the Summit of the Americas in 2018, considers corruption as an antecedent crime for excellence and fighting it as a precondition for strengthening democratic governance. In particular, inter-American anti-corruption mechanisms stand out, such as the Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (MESICIC).

And the **Lisbon Declaration**, agreed upon at the Second Meeting of the Justice Institutions of the European Union and Latin America in 2021, lays the foundations for defining the operating standards of the criminal justice system. In this context, the Conference of Ministers of Justice of the Ibero-American countries, the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors, and the Inter-American Judicial Summit promote cooperation and coordination between national judicial institutions at the continental level.

Class Content

In addition to the normative frameworks, the Regional Mechanisms for the implementation of cooperation programs in the fight against crime must be mentioned. First, there is the **Department against Transnational Organized Crime of the Organization of American States** of **OAS**, an agency that provides technical advice and promotes and implements cooperation projects among member States.

Among its programs, it is important to mention: the Technical Assistance Program for the effective application of investigative tools to combat transnational organized crime; the Program on Confiscation and Administration of Property of Illicit Origin and Destination; the Program to combat money laundering and terrorist financing; and the Conference of National Authorities to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking.



Class Content

Second, **UNODC's Network of Anti-Drug Prosecutors against Transnational Organized Crime (REFCO)**, which provides technical assistance at the country level, foster direct contact and secure communication between law enforcement authorities to carry out coordinated regional operations.

Also noteworthy is the **Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors and the Framework Agreement for the creation of MERCOSUL Joint Investigation Teams**.

All of these cooperation mechanisms are absolutely essential to operationalize the declarations of principles in the aforementioned Declarations, thus enhancing national strengths and mitigating weaknesses in the fight against the threats and multidimensional impacts of organized crime.



Class Content

AMERIPOL possibly represents the most evolved agency in terms of police cooperation in the scenario of violence in Latin America. It consolidates itself as a reference in police cooperation with the support of the European Union through OPACTO, which contributed to the creation of the **AMERIPOL Police Information System (SIPA)**.

In 2022, the following was also created: the **Network of Action Teams against Fugitives (ANFAST Network)**, to facilitate the location and joint arrest of criminals who escape from their countries of origin; and the **Specialized Center on Cyber Crimes and the Specialized International Center on Combating Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking**, both to fight two of the fastest growing criminal modalities at the continental context.



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Even though these agreements are in motion, **there is an urgent need to strengthen cooperation agreements and mechanisms** through concrete measures to reduce bureaucracy, digitize faster and harmonize real and factual procedures for the control, monitoring and prevention of organized crime, especially through strengthening borders to fight multidimensional security threats.

Similarly, **it is convenient to replicate the model of joint investigation teams among specialized prosecutors**, accompanied by the facilitation of intelligence information exchange and access to digitized databases of criminal records.



Class Summary

- Emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation in combating organized crime and illicit markets;
- It presents the main normative frameworks for the subject: the Declaration of Lima and Lisbon Declaration;
- It presents the cooperation mechanisms that stand out, mainly AMERIPOL;
- It introduces the main challenges for the future of regional cooperation to fight organized crime.



Reference

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