

UN Goodwill Ambassador Nicolas Cage urges action against organized crime



Nicolas Cage

21 October 2010 – Nicolas Cage, renowned actor, filmmaker and Goodwill Ambassador for Global Justice for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (**UNODC**), today spoke of the anguish of victims, especially the young, of organized crimes around the world, urging States to join a UN pact designed to fight the scourge.

“It’s often the most innocent people, the ones who don’t have suspicion or cynicism within them, who are led astray to make mistakes by predators who abuse them for their personal gain and for money,” Mr. Cage **told** a UN conference in Vienna, Austria.

Organized crime is a deadly infection that preys on human beings. It sows fear and violence in cities, towns and villages around the world.

“If a young child is forced to become a soldier or a drug mule or a prostitute, is that child a criminal – or a victim? If a teenaged boy sees no future for himself other than joining a gang, a drug mafia, or a band of pirates, isn’t he also one of crimes casualties?” Mr. Cage asked delegates attending the conference on progress towards the adoption of the **UN Convention against Transitional Organized Crime**.

He recalled his mission with UNODC to Kenya and Uganda, last year where he met a 15-year-old boy who is serving a 10-year jail term in the Kenyan city of Mombasa after he was captured as part of a group of marine pirates off the coast of Somalia. In Uganda, children who had been abducted and forced to become soldiers narrated heart-wrenching stories of atrocities they had been forced to commit, as well as the sexual slavery some had endured.

“[Fifteen-year-old] Rashad is considered a criminal because he was a pirate. But it is important to recognize that he is also a victim of transnational organized crime. We must not forget there are many kinds of victims of organized crime, and that children are among the most vulnerable,” Mr. Cage said.

"Organized crime is a deadly infection that preys on human beings. It sows fear and violence in cities, towns and villages around the world. Its poison spreads quickly, damaging communities and institutions-sometimes to the point of failure. It targets vulnerable states and regions weakened by conflict, lawlessness, extreme poverty and corruption. It feeds off instability, and also makes instability worse," he added.

The Convention was adopted in 2000 in Palermo, Italy, and is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime.

It is supplemented by three Protocols, which target specific areas and manifestations of organized crime – the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition.

Mr. Cage, who has starred in more than 60 movies and won an Academy Award for Best Actor in for the film Leaving Las Vegas, said efforts to combat organized crime can only succeed if States work together.

"The Convention is a formidable tool with far-reaching potential. But the Convention and its Protocols can only stop criminals if States make use of them," he said, making an impassioned plea for the ratification and implementation of the pact.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

Top UN official warns of organized crime's global reach