



# University for Peace



## CONCEPT NOTE

The University for Peace (UPEACE) was established by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 35/55 of 5 December 1980 with the purpose of promoting the spirit of understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence among human beings, encouraging cooperation among peoples, and helping to overcome obstacles and avert threats to world peace and progress, in accordance with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations. To this end, UPEACE has undertaken the task of educating for peace, which contributes to the sustainable development of societies, through the dissemination of knowledge to research, graduate, and doctoral students, as well as professionals who interact with UPEACE during their careers. Currently, there are 41 signatory states of the International Agreement for the Establishment of UPEACE, which, through scholarships provided to these countries, increases the number and diversity of young peacekeepers and peacemakers who graduate from UPEACE. All students receive courses on conflict resolution based on global perspectives that prioritize the role of international institutions and normative frameworks, including the goals set by the 2030 UN Agenda.

Recognizing that illicit trade and transnational organized crime are complex phenomena that include a plurality of jurisdictions, shared networks, and activities, UPEACE identified the need to educate and share knowledge and best practices with authorities, stakeholders, and private individuals to combat illicit trade and transnational organized crime. In this context, UPEACE signed a cooperation agreement in August 2020 with Philip Morris International (PMI) to create the **Chair on Countering Illicit Trade and Preventing Transnational Organized Crime (Chair)**. The agreement between UPEACE and PMI falls under the mandate of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16 and 17, in which academic institutions and the private sector agree to cooperate on and address complex issues that affect national, regional, and international security and inhibit countries' paths toward sustainable development and peace.

UPEACE officially launched the Chair in December 2020 at the webinar on **Regional Tools to Counter Illicit Trade and Transnational Organized Crime**. During its first year of activities, the Chair provided capacity-building initiatives to more than 3,400 participants through 19 courses; offered three international certifications on topics related to illicit financial flows, blockchain, compliance, and trade-based money laundering; signed seven memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with institutions from different countries; and launched four publications, including chapters and journal articles. The Chair became a relevant part of the UN agenda in August 2021 when UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres acknowledged the creation of the Chair in UN Report A/76/259, which highlighted the Chair's principal objective: to understand the impact of organized crime and the level of conflict it generates, particularly regarding state fragility and structural violence, through the application of theoretical and conceptual approaches.



# University for Peace



In this context, the UNGA approved, in December 2021, UPEACE Resolution A/C.4/76/L.11 as it was originally proposed by the UNGA Fourth Committee. The resolution welcomed the university's implementation of innovative programs on critical issues related to peace and security. These programs reflect the Chair's capacity to understand current challenges for democracy, international stability, security, and sustainable development at the local, regional, and global levels.

The Chair's four pillars are:

- Capacity building and training
- Research
- Knowledge dissemination (events, guest talks, and publications)
- Advocacy by means of participation in ad hoc committees on conventions and steering committees on themes related to transnational organized crime and cybercrime

**Chair achievements:**

- More than 3,400 participants trained through 19 courses
- Three international certifications
- Seven memorandums of understanding (MoU)
- Four publications
- Member of the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes
- Member of the Steering Committee of the Global Strategy Against Organized Crime

**Chair research focus areas:**

- White Paper on Illicit Economies and Organized Crime in Africa
- The Fragility of the State and Transnational Organized Crime: A Threat to Peace Dynamics in Latin America
- Mapping of News on Corruption and Transnational Organized crime in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras
- The Legal Framework of Countries in the Tri Border Area and in the Northern Triangle (2010-2020): A Legal Tracker for the Fight against Transnational Organized Crime (TOC), Illicit Trade, and Corruption
- Governance and Organized Crime in Port Cities



# University for Peace



Meet the team at the Chair:



Juan Carlos  
Sainz-Borgo  
*Dean*



Maurício  
Vieira  
*Head of the Chair*



Silvia Leon  
Kolberg  
*Project Manager*



Emma  
Farris  
*Assistant to the Chair*

## Lessons learned and looking ahead:

The Chair has provided knowledge and expertise beyond its domain, through partnerships and outside initiatives, while acting as an example of real impact regarding how learning institutions and, more broadly, societies may work toward a more peaceful coexistence. UPEACE works with stakeholders in the public and private sectors, along with members of the international community to increase the scope of its academic and professional activities. Some of the institutions with whom UPEACE is working include the Foundation for the Study of Money Laundering and Financial Crimes (FELADE), the Federation of Chambers of Industry of Central America and the Dominican Republic (FECAICA), and the Municipality of Cartago of Costa Rica. UPEACE supports the participation of the private sector to achieve sustainable development, as laid out in SDG 17. In December 2021, UPEACE Chair participated in the World Law Congress in Barranquilla Colombia. An event organized by the World Law Foundation in which conferences from different organizations converge. This Biennial Congress is so-called the Davos of Law. The Chair, along with other well-known organizations as the OISTE Foundation, tackled in a dedicated panel the importance of 4IR technologies to counter illicit trade and transnational crimes, that as drivers to ensure the effectiveness of the rule of law and the enforcement of democracy to achieve peace.

For 2022, the Chair continues its work toward its capacity building pillar, also targeting police officers in Costa Rica and journalists in Central America. Regarding its research pillar, the Chair is focusing on publishing the preliminary results of its research lines, specifically the launch of the White Paper on Illicit Economies and Organized Crime in Africa. On advocacy, the Chair began engaging with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on the issues of the Review Mechanism of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. The Chair gives the brunt of its attention to feasible initiatives and highly committed partner institutions.



# University for Peace



More information:

Chair on Countering Illicit Trade and  
Preventing Transnational Organized Crime, UPEACE  
+506 2205 9003 | [illicit.toc@upeace.org](mailto:illicit.toc@upeace.org)