Mr. Chairman,
Allow me to thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak on the agenda items concerning drugs and crime.

My delegation welcomes the reports made by the Secretary-General under these agenda items and associates itself with the statements made by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Mr. Chairman,
The advancement of the rule of law is crucial to sustainable economic and social development. As the Secretary General’s report on the Implementation of the mandates of the United Nations Crime prevention and criminal justice programme noted, individuals and societies can realize their full development potential when they are free from fear and violence and have access to responsive institutions and rules that are enforced in a predictable and transparent manner.

We have seen significant gains made in crime prevention in recent years. We have witnessed the establishment of national, regional, and international legal and institutional frameworks to address the problem of crime. Advances in information and communications technologies, however, which have resulted in increased interconnectedness among nations, have also allowed criminal groups to internationalize their operations. Criminal organizations are taking advantage of the use of modern technology in drug trafficking; trafficking of persons, especially women and
children, including migrants; money laundering; fraud; and cyber crimes. The global dimension of organized crimes has made it difficult for nations to depend solely on their own to provide for the protection of their nationals.

Given the magnitude of the problem, we cannot overemphasize the need to enhance the implementation of national, regional, and international legal frameworks; to strengthen domestic policies and initiatives; and to forge stronger partnerships to combat organized crimes.

Mr. Chairman,

Organized crimes undermine social values and development, violate human rights, and threaten the stability of societies. The complexity and magnitude of this issue requires a clear and well-coordinated approach.

The Philippines, which places a high priority on crime prevention, has therefore put in place a number of domestic measures to enhance national synergy in the implementation of important criminal legislation. For instance, the expanded anti-trafficking in persons law provides for the establishment of a network and support arrangement that includes all relevant domestic agencies. The network called the Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking (IACAT), which is composed of a number of agencies with the Secretary of Justice as Chairperson, is tasked to ensure the harmonization and standardization of databases, collection systems, and data verification systems on trafficking in persons cases.

In the absence of legislation-mandated arrangements, we have in place a series of Memoranda of Agreements (MOAs) such as the one involving the fight against money laundering, where domestic agencies commit themselves to supporting the Anti-Money Laundering Council in implementing anti-money laundering legislation, including cooperation with foreign financial intelligence units.

Cognizant that domestic initiatives can only be effectively implemented if these are complemented at the regional and international levels, the Philippines has also become a party to various multilateral treaties. These include the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Vienna Convention), the 1999 UN International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, the 2000 UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, and the UN Convention Against Corruption.

Mr. Chairman,

Strong partnerships and cooperation are essential to any strategy that we adopt to combat organized crimes. We need to share good practices and establish and a shared database on intelligence and information among countries to deter organized criminal groups from operating across borders at will. Coordination and information-sharing
among law enforcement agencies are crucial to prevent those involved in organized crimes from taking advantage of porous national borders, deficiencies in institutional mechanisms, and gaps in domestic legislation. International and regional cooperation and assistance must be enhanced through treaties of Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance, especially with regard to investigation, prosecution, and transfer of organized offenders to the place of commission of the crime. Regulatory arrangements, such as those requiring financial institutions to report suspicious transactions, must be tightened to suppress terrorist financing. States should pursue initiatives geared towards good governance, enhanced transparency, and public accountability; and adopt public awareness campaigns on the evils of corruption.

At the regional level, cooperation under the auspices of regional organizations can also be explored in pursuing measures to combat transnational organized crimes through information exchanges, database development, training, and capacity-building.

Mr. Chairman,

Combating organized crimes can only be pursued with a reasonable expectation of success under the paradigm of a strong cooperation among states with the assistance of the United Nations. It is in this context that the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) can provide technical assistance to states, especially in improving legislative and administrative mechanisms; strengthening capacity to implement laws, rules and regulations, particularly in terms of professional training of criminal justice officials; and training personnel in the use of modern technology. In particular, the UNODC can, among others, further pursue initiatives and programs aimed at assisting states in ensuring that domestic laws are strengthened in line with the spirit enshrined in the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and harmonized with obligations made under international instruments to which they are parties to.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we have taken note that in its normative and technical assistance work, UNODC has continued joining forces and strengthening coordination with other agencies and organizations such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to mainstream human rights into its programmes and activities. We welcome this step taken, as well as the UNODC’s initiative of advancing the implementation of system-wide initiatives aimed at ensuring comprehensive and holistic responses to organized crimes and drug trafficking. We need to put a human face behind every crime statistic and remember the victims of organized crimes who have to cope not only with the immediate aftermath of the crime, but also its longer term effects of victimization. The global agenda on crime requires innovative solutions, a holistic approach, and a strong political will. We must be steadfast in our commitment towards achieving a safer, more just and humane society.

Thank you.