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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND MODERN CRIMES

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, the United Nations recognized the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a globally accepted framework for tackling critical social, environmental, and economic challenges. However, the growth of modern crimes like cybercrime, human trafficking, fraud, and environmental offenses presents major obstacles to achieving these goals.

Modern crimes threaten the SDGs in various ways. For instance, cybercrime weakens institutions (SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and disrupts economic stability (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth). Human trafficking exploits vulnerable groups, violating basic human rights (SDGs 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8, and SDG 16). Corruption erodes public trust and hampers efforts to eliminate poverty (SDG 1: No Poverty) and reduce inequality (SDG 10). Environmental crimes, such as illegal deforestation and pollution, directly affect SDGs 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land).

To address these threats, governments, businesses, and civil society must collaborate to enforce laws, enhance cybersecurity, promote transparency, and advance education. International cooperation is essential to combat transnational crimes and ensure justice. Integrating crime prevention strategies into the SDG framework is vital for achieving a sustainable and secure future.

By addressing modern crimes through sustainable policies and effective law enforcement, societies can ensure progress towards the SDGs while fostering peace, prosperity, and environmental preservation.

KEY WORDS: United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, Millennium Development Goals, Contemporary Crimes, Cybercrime, Human Trafficking, and Environmental Offenses.

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a worldwide initiative aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity for everyone by 2030. These 17 goals address key areas of sustainable development, including social inclusion, economic progress, environmental protection, and good governance. Achieving the SDGs requires international cooperation and the

elimination of obstacles such as inequality, corruption, and environmental harm.

Nonetheless, the rise of modern crimes poses a significant challenge to the achievement of these goals. Crimes such as terrorism, financial fraud, corruption, human trafficking, cybercrime, and environmental offenses threaten economic stability, social equity, and the integrity of institutions. For example, human trafficking exploits vulnerable populations, undermining SDG 5 (Gender

Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth); corruption weakens institutional frameworks, affecting SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions); and environmental crimes obstruct efforts related to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

To address these challenges, governments, businesses, and civil society organizations must strengthen cybersecurity, enhance legal frameworks, promote transparency, and foster ethical leadership. Achieving the SDGs and creating a just, sustainable, and secure future relies greatly on effective crime prevention measures and strong law enforcement strategies.⁷³⁸

Overview of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations adopted 17 global objectives known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals serve as a framework for addressing key global challenges, including poverty, inequality, environmental harm, climate change, and the promotion of peace and justice. The SDGs aim to create a sustainable and thriving future for all people.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals:

- 1. No Poverty:** Eliminate extreme poverty and ensure universal access to social protection systems.
- 2. Zero Hunger:** Encourage sustainable farming practices, improve nutritional standards, and achieve food security.
- 3. Good Health and Well-Being:** Promote healthy living and ensure the availability of quality healthcare services for all.
- 4. High-quality education:** Provide equitable and inclusive education

to support lifelong learning opportunities.

- 5. Gender Equality:** Eliminate gender-based discrimination and strengthen the rights and opportunities of women and girls.
- 6. Clean Water and Sanitation:** Ensure universal access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation services.
- 7. Clean and Affordable Energy:** Promote the adoption of modern, sustainable energy solutions.
- 8. Good Work and Economic Development:** Foster job creation, economic growth, and safe working environments.
- 9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** Promote sustainable industrial practices and develop resilient infrastructure.
- 10. Less Inequality:** Reduce the disparities in opportunities and wealth both between and within countries.
- 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Develop sustainable, secure, and environmentally friendly urban areas.
- 12. Responsible Production and Consumption:** Promote sustainable production and consumption practices.
- 13. Climate Action:** Take immediate action to reduce the impacts of climate change.
- 14. Life Below Water:** Safeguard and manage seas, oceans, and marine resources sustainably.
- 15. Life on Land:** Conserve, restore, and promote the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems.
- 16. Peace, Justice, and Robust Institutions:** Promote inclusive, peaceful communities and effective governance.

⁷³⁸ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

17. Partnerships for the Goals:

Strengthen global partnerships for sustainable development.⁷³⁹

DEFINITION OF MODERN CRIMES:

Modern crimes refer to illegal activities that have emerged or evolved due to globalization, technological advancements, and societal changes. These crimes are complex and difficult to regulate, as they often exploit global networks, financial systems, and digital infrastructure.

Types of Modern Crimes

- 1) **Cybercrime:** Offenses carried out via the internet, such as ransomware attacks, identity fraud, hacking, and cyber scams.
- 2) **Human trafficking:** The illegal trafficking of people for purposes such as slavery, forced labor, or sexual exploitation.
- 3) **Financial Crimes:** These include cryptocurrency scams, insider trading, tax fraud, and money laundering.
- 4) **Environmental Crimes:** Offenses that damage the environment, such as pollution, illegal wildlife trade, and deforestation.
- 5) **Terrorism and Extremism:** The application of violence or cyberattacks to destabilize governments and threaten security.
- 6) **Organised Crime:** Criminal networks engage in activities such as illegal gambling, arms smuggling, and drug trafficking.

These crimes pose significant risks to security, economic stability, and sustainable development. Combating modern crimes involves enforcing stricter regulations,

enhancing global cooperation, and utilizing advanced technologies in law enforcement.

The Impact of Modern Crimes on Sustainable Development

Modern crimes such as financial fraud, corruption, human trafficking, cybercrime, and environmental offenses pose major obstacles to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These crimes hinder sustainable progress by weakening economies, increasing inequalities, compromising governance, and harming the environment.

1. Economic Effects

This issue is closely connected to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG 1 (No Poverty). Financial crimes and corruption divert public funds meant for development, reducing investments in critical areas like infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Fraud and cybercrime cost businesses billions, weakening job opportunities and threatening economic stability. Additionally, human trafficking and forced labor exploit vulnerable populations, limiting their chances for fair wages and decent work.

2. Importance for Human Rights and Society

This issue is linked to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Organized crime and human trafficking exploit vulnerable groups, with women and children being especially at risk. Cybercrime and online scams target personal information, leading to financial losses and emotional distress. Meanwhile, corruption within public institutions weakens trust in governance and legal systems, fueling political instability.

Example:

According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), more than 50 million people

⁷³⁹<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

globally suffer from forced labor and human trafficking, violations of their human rights that hinder progress toward gender equality and justice.⁷⁴⁰

3. Environmental Destruction

This issue is connected to SDGs 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land). Pollution, poaching, and illegal logging all damage ecosystems and biodiversity. Money laundering and illegal trade fund activities that destroy forests and marine life. Financial fraud and cybercrime enable illicit transactions that support environmental crimes.

Example:

The World Bank estimates that environmental crimes result in annual losses ranging from \$110 billion to \$281 billion, weakening efforts to protect natural resources and combat climate change.⁷⁴¹

4. Institutional Weakness and Governance

Relevant SDGs include SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Corruption within legal and law enforcement institutions undermines crime prevention efforts. Financial crimes and tax evasion reduce government revenue, affecting the funding of social services. Weak regulatory frameworks make it difficult to effectively enforce laws against modern crimes.

Example:

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) highlights corruption as a major barrier to achieving SDG 16, as it undermines public trust and reduces transparency.⁷⁴²

5. Methods for Dealing with Contemporary Crimes for Sustainable Growth

Boosting International Cooperation: Countries must work together to

combat transnational crimes.

Enhancing Cybersecurity: Investing in digital security can help reduce cybercrime threats.

Enforcing Anti-Corruption Laws: Stronger legal frameworks are needed to tackle financial crimes.

Promoting Ethical Business Practices: Companies should adopt policies focused on sustainability.

Increasing Public Awareness: Educational campaigns can help raise awareness and fight exploitation.

Strategies to Combat Modern Crimes and Support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Contemporary crimes, including organized crime, cybercrime, human trafficking, corruption, and illicit financial flows, pose significant threats to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). To combat these crimes and further the SDGs, legal reforms, global cooperation, technology-driven solutions, and community engagement are essential.

Important Techniques for Combating Contemporary Crimes

1. Fortifying Law Enforcement and Legal Frameworks

Adhering to international agreements such as the UN Convention Against Corruption and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. Tackling corruption within government and law enforcement, while reinforcing judicial independence. Enforcing harsher penalties and improving legal processes to combat organized crime, human trafficking, and cybercrime.

2. Strengthening Global Collaboration

Strengthening global partnerships to identify and dismantle transnational criminal

⁷⁴⁰ <https://www.unodc.org>

⁷⁴¹ <https://www.worldbank.org>

⁷⁴² <https://www.undp.org>

networks through organizations like Interpol and the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). Nations share intelligence and effective strategies to combat crimes such as drug trafficking and cyber fraud.

3. The Use of Technology to Prevent Crime

Implementing AI-driven cybersecurity measures to prevent identity theft and cyberattacks. Enhancing digital forensics capabilities to trace illicit financial activities and prevent money laundering. Minimizing financial fraud by using blockchain technology for secure and transparent transactions.

4. Combating Money Laundering and Corruption

Establishing transparent governance systems to reduce corruption in both public and private sectors. Strengthening regulatory frameworks to recover embezzled assets and track illicit financial transactions. Encouraging initiatives that protect whistleblowers to foster the reporting of corruption.

5. Social and Community Involvement

Implementing educational programs to raise public awareness of crimes such as environmental offenses, cyber fraud, and human trafficking. Strengthening rehabilitation and reintegration programs for offenders to reduce recidivism. Promoting partnerships between the public and private sectors to fund initiatives that enhance economic opportunities and prevent crime.

6. Prevention of Environmental Crime

To support SDG 13 (Climate Action), laws addressing pollution, deforestation, and illegal wildlife trafficking should be reinforced. Enhancing efforts to combat environmental crimes committed by corporations.

How the SDGs Are Supported by These Strategies

- I. SDG 16: Ensures strong legal frameworks, promotes justice, and reduces corruption.

- II. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): A fair business environment is promoted through the prevention of financial crimes.
- III. SDG 13 (Climate Action): Ecosystem protection is strengthened by addressing environmental crimes.
- IV. SDG 5 (Gender Equality): Women's rights and safety are upheld by tackling gender-based violence and human trafficking.

Real Cases of Modern Crimes Affecting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Contemporary crimes, particularly financial and environmental offenses, have a profound effect on sustainable development. Below are some real-life examples that illustrate this connection:

1. Nigeria's Operation Aurum

This operation targeted illegal mining and mercury trafficking, which led to deforestation, water contamination, and widespread environmental damage. It also exposed the links between illegal mining and human rights abuses, including child labor and forced labor, affecting SDGs related to social justice, economic development, and environmental sustainability. A significant quantity of illegally mined resources was confiscated, and over fifty-two individuals were arrested.

2. Operation Bahia Negra (Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia)

Focused on dismantling criminal networks involved in forced labor, illegal poaching, and timber trafficking in ecologically sensitive regions. The operation led to the arrest of 23 individuals and the confiscation of wildlife trafficking networks. This case highlights the link between environmental crimes and other serious offenses like organized crime and human trafficking.

3. Illegal Networks for Wildlife Trafficking and Logging

For over a decade, INTERPOL has been combating organized environmental crime,

dismantling animal trafficking networks and seizing millions of dollars' worth of illegally harvested timber. These crimes harm ecosystems and biodiversity, negatively impacting SDG 13 (Climate Action).

4. Environmental degradation and financial crimes

Criminal organizations frequently launder the proceeds of environmental crimes through legitimate markets, exploiting weak anti-money laundering systems. The World Bank has emphasized the need for collaboration between environmental policymakers and financial crime experts to effectively address financial crime. These examples highlight the direct impact of modern crimes on sustainable development and the necessity of international cooperation to combat them.

Conclusion

Modern crimes such as financial fraud, human trafficking, cybercrime, corruption, and environmental offenses pose significant risks to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These crimes hinder the creation of a fair and prosperous society by obstructing social justice, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

Tackling these crimes requires the collaboration of governments, businesses, and civil society to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Strengthening legal frameworks, fostering international cooperation, advancing technology, and engaging communities are essential to ensuring the continued success and inclusivity of sustainable development efforts. If modern crimes are allowed to persist, worsening inequality, undermining institutions, and hindering economic progress, achieving the SDGs will be nearly impossible. A multi-stakeholder approach, supported by innovation, governance, and policy reform, is crucial to making the world safer and more equitable.

Suggestions for Combating Modern Crimes and Supporting SDGs

Suggestions for Combating Modern Crimes and Supporting SDGs namely,

- 1) Fortify national and international legal systems

Implement more stringent laws to combat cybercrime, trafficking, and corruption. Ensure judicial and law enforcement independence to reduce impunity. Promote laws that safeguard whistleblowers to expose corruption and financial crimes.

- 2) Strengthen International Collaboration and Information Exchange

Countries should strengthen their collaboration with UNODC, Interpol, and regional organizations to track down criminals and illicit financial flows. Implement cross-border crime-fighting agreements and extradition treaties. Foster international cooperation in cybersecurity to combat cybercrimes.

- 3) Make Use of Technology to Reduce Crime

Utilize big data, blockchain, and artificial intelligence to detect and prevent financial crimes. Strengthen cybersecurity regulations to protect individuals from identity theft and fraud. Employ digital tools and satellite monitoring to track illegal activities such as animal trafficking and deforestation.

- 4) Promote Good Governance and Transparency

Implement open government data platforms to enhance transparency in public spending. Support corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to promote ethical business practices. Strengthen banking regulations to prevent illegal transactions and tax evasion.

- 5) Increase Knowledge and Strengthen Communities

Initiate educational and awareness campaigns focused on financial

fraud, environmental crimes, and human trafficking. Provide economic opportunities and skills development to reduce the vulnerability of local communities to crime. Support NGOs and civil society organizations that focus on victim rehabilitation and crime prevention.

6) Strengthen Environmental Protection

Introduce stricter laws to tackle pollution, poaching, and illegal logging. Promote eco-friendly business practices that reduce environmental harm. Support global efforts to fight environmental crimes, such as the Paris Agreement and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

