

Belgium at the forefront of the fight against the trade in falsified medicines

ITM's expertise contributed to the Belgium-led, newly-approved UNODC resolution

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Dit is de omschrijving

Through its framework agreement with the Directorate-general Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD), ITM has been providing policy support to Belgian institutions about the issue of poor quality medicines for many years. We are happy that our expertise contributed to the Belgium-led, newly-approved United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) resolution “Preventing and combatting the manufacturing of and trafficking in falsified medical products, as a transnational organized crime”. Raffaella Ravinetto, researcher and policy advisor at ITM, said: *“Poor-quality medicines threaten public health and health systems, particularly in poorly-regulated settings. While the World Health Organization does essential work to strengthen regulatory oversight everywhere, the new UNODC resolution will help to combat the falsification of medical products by organized crime. We need a multidisciplinary and multilateral approach, to ensure that everybody receive medicines we can trust”*.

The Tenth Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) adopted a Belgian resolution aimed at combating the manufacturing and trafficking of counterfeit medical products. Trafficking in falsified medicines and medical products is a very lucrative business. This only increased during the COVID19 pandemic, as the demand for such products has increased exponentially. Globally, the most vulnerable are the first to suffer.

Belgium has a long tradition of successfully combating such contraband goods. The established pharmaceutical sector has also been warning for a long time about the threat and dangers falsified medicines pose to society.

The resolution that was adopted, takes a transversal approach and was the result of close cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Justice, the Belgian Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products and the Institute of Tropical Medicine.

The resolution should lead to a sound international normative framework. It is important that the international community recognizes these crimes as serious crimes that must be tackled within the scope of the UNTOC convention. The Convention is the appropriate forum to promote international cooperation and strengthen national efforts to prevent and combat the criminal activities of illicit trafficking in counterfeit medical products.

It also requires an efficient exchange of information and best practices between law enforcement, legislative and judicial authorities in order to better prevent, detect and prosecute these crimes. UNODC can play an important coordinating role in this respect at the service of the member states.

Only through intensive international cooperation, we can successfully combat this growing, and extremely harmful, criminal activity.