Falsified medicines represent 10% of the global pharmaceutical market. A total of 60% of medicines used in Africa are falsified, making the latter the most affected continent in terms of falsified medicines. Transnational organized crime favors this criminal conduct which generates a risk-free profit of $85bn. The repercussions are significant with regard to public health and result in hundreds of thousands of deaths on a yearly basis.

Most falsified medicines come from China and India. To date, the interceptions of shipments which have been made have not resulted in serious outcomes.

In Africa, national laws in this area either do not exist or are incomplete. The sentences provided to sanction traffickers are often ludicrous, non-dissuasive and are not applied. African judicial officials have been unable to implement international mutual legal assistance which would help to track down suspects, locate and freeze traffickers' assets and arrest the latter.

Only one African state has approved the European Council’s international Medicrime Convention to fight against falsified medicines. The UNTOC Convention, which has been approved by a large number of states, would be most helpful in developing mutual legal assistance for trafficking mechanisms but this has not been used until now.

It is now vital to implement mutual legal assistance between the countries through which traffickers are shipping falsified medicines. The International Association of Prosecutors meeting in Beijing is the opportunity to lay the foundations for solid, international mutual legal assistance between Chinese and African prosecutors who are dealing with the same criminal traffic. Chinese and African prosecutors’ priority is to become familiar with, and identify, the problems which are most frequently met when combating this traffic, and create pre-existing cooperation channels so that legal assistance can be comprehensively implemented when falsified medicine shipments are sent between Chinese and African ports.