



Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

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International cooperation, with particular emphasis on extradition, mutual legal assistance and international cooperation for the purpose of confiscation, and the establishment and strengthening of central authorities

Activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to promote the implementation of the provisions on international cooperation in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

Report of the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [78/229](#) of 19 December 2023, entitled “Strengthening the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity”, the General Assembly stressed the importance of strengthened international cooperation, based on the principles of common and shared responsibility and in accordance with international law, to, inter alia, counter transnational organized crime; of law enforcement cooperation and exchange of information, in accordance with international law, as well as of designated central authorities and effective points of contact dedicated to facilitating the procedures related to international cooperation, including for extradition and mutual legal assistance requests; and of the coordinating role of relevant regional networks.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to continue to provide technical assistance to Member States, upon request, including, inter alia, in the field of international cooperation in criminal matters, to strengthen the rule of law, also taking into account the work undertaken by other United Nations entities, within existing mandates, as well as regional and bilateral efforts. Furthermore, the Assembly urged Member States, in cooperation with the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, to develop national, subregional, regional and international strategies, with the support of relevant international organizations, as appropriate, and other necessary measures, including the establishment, in accordance with international obligations and domestic legislation, of designated central and competent authorities and effective points of contact dedicated to facilitating the procedures related to

* [CTOC/COP/2024/1](#).



international cooperation, including for extradition and mutual legal assistance requests, in order to effectively address transnational organized crime.

3. In its resolution [78/267](#) of 21 March 2024, the General Assembly decided to declare 15 November the International Day for the Prevention of and Fight against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime, in order to raise awareness of the threats posed by all forms of transnational organized crime and to enhance international cooperation in that regard. In the same resolution, the Assembly invited all Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and other global and regional organizations, within existing resources, as well as other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia and the media, to commemorate the International Day in an appropriate manner, including through educational and public awareness-raising activities, and to share best practices in that regard. The Assembly also invited UNODC, in collaboration with other relevant entities, to facilitate the observance of the International Day.

4. The present report provides an overview of activities undertaken by UNODC since the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, held in Vienna from 17 to 21 October 2022, to promote the implementation of the provisions on international cooperation of the Convention. Where necessary, the report also outlines developments and action taken in other intergovernmental processes, either because of mandates authorizing synergies and open channels of communication between the Conference and those intergovernmental processes, or because of the importance and the cross-cutting nature of the issues under discussion in such processes.

II. Judicial networking to combat transnational organized crime

5. UNODC continued to support several international networks of focal points to facilitate cooperation in criminal matters and the effective exchange of information and expertise by, inter alia, building trust and creating contacts among practitioners.

6. In 2023, the Judicial Cooperation Network for Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus (CASC Network), supported by the UNODC Global Programme on Criminal Network Disruption, facilitated regional, interregional and global cooperation in 20 cases. The CASC Network, supported by UNODC, also facilitated contact among central authorities within the region of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus and between them and central authorities in the European Union, Africa, Latin America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. One of the main achievements of the CASC Network was the facilitation of a bilateral treaty concluded between Italy and Uzbekistan on international cooperation in criminal matters. The CASC Network secretariat held eight events focused on capacity-building and strengthening cooperation between networks, bringing together 180 practitioners and 20 international experts.

7. One of the highlights of 2023 for the CASC Network was the launch of a project entitled “Digitalization of international legal cooperation processes in Uzbekistan”, which is being implemented by UNODC through its Global Programme on Criminal Network Disruption and its Regional Office for Central Asia. The project is aimed at enhancing the technical capacity of the Prosecutor General’s Office of Uzbekistan through the development of information technology solutions and policy tools for the electronic transmission of international cooperation requests, as well as the analysis of trends in transnational organized crime.

8. The project will increase the ability of the Prosecutor General’s Office to track both incoming and outgoing international cooperation requests through the development of a smart database. This digital solution will also advance information collection and segregation, enabling the systematic analysis of trends and contributing to more effective criminal justice responses to transnational organized threats. Under

the project, legal and policy tools will be developed as part of institutional capacity-building and further technical assistance activities will be provided for the central authority's personnel.

9. UNODC continued to coordinate with the South-East Asia Justice Network, which expanded from 12 to 14 member countries. The Office promoted the Network within and beyond South-East Asia, procured machine translation services and facilitated the preparation and transmission of and follow-up to mutual legal assistance and extradition requests. At the request of Network member countries, the Office also implemented capacity-building activities in relation to mutual legal assistance and extradition, the sharing of electronic evidence across borders, corruption, money-laundering, the financing of terrorism, and crimes that affect the environment.

10. UNODC continued to support the Network of West African Central Authorities and Prosecutors against Organized Crime (WACAP) and its secretariat. The training-of-trainers programme has been one of the pillars of the work of WACAP. The initiative has created a pool of experts in the region who are able to raise awareness among their peers of the need for effective international cooperation. In November 2022, a total of 42 judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers from 11 countries in the subregion benefited from such training in Dakar. In 2022, 89 mutual legal assistance cases were facilitated within West Africa and at the global level.

11. The eleventh plenary meeting of WACAP was held in Lomé in November 2022, and brought together experts from the German Agency for International Cooperation, the Global Programme on Criminal Network Disruption and the Global Maritime Crime Programme. The discussions led to the creation of the Network's working group on maritime crime-related issues.

12. In 2023, WACAP assisted Burkina Faso, the Gambia and Mali in updating their mutual legal assistance laws. It also supported the negotiation of bilateral agreements between Italy and the Niger, and between Guinea Bissau and Mali. In addition, WACAP organized joint operational meetings, including an ad hoc meeting between Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Mali and Sierra Leone related to the capsizing of a boat off the coast of the island of Boa Vista, Cabo Verde, carrying more than 100 migrants, including nationals of those countries. In July 2023, WACAP supported a case involving Belgium and Guinea, which led to the extradition of a Belgian citizen.

13. To promote connections between judicial networks, WACAP members participated in a study visit to the headquarters of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation and the European Judicial Network in June 2023. This led several countries to appoint focal points for cooperation with some of those networks. Cabo Verde, Chad, the Gambia, Ghana and Togo have appointed focal points to Eurojust.

14. In 2023, WACAP facilitated more than 100 cases of mutual legal assistance between West African countries and between them and countries in other regions. WACAP also held several training activities for its member States on the drafting of mutual legal assistance requests. A training-of-trainers workshop on mutual legal assistance tools in the fight against trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants was held in September 2023.

15. UNODC, through its Global Maritime Crime Programme, continued to support judicial networks under the auspices of the prosecutors' networks of the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime, the Caribbean Forum on Maritime Crime and other regional platforms in order to facilitate cooperation among prosecutors handling cases of maritime crime.

16. In 2023, UNODC, within the framework of the CRIMJUST project of the Global Programme on Criminal Network Disruption, provided support to the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP) through two of its thematic networks,

namely, the Ibero-American Network of Anti-Drug Prosecutors (RFAI) and the International Cooperation Network in Criminal Matters (REDCOOP), in organizing four case forums for prosecutors and investigators. The CRIMJUST project also supported prosecutors from the Specialized Meeting of Public Prosecutors of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), specifically its subcommittees on narco-criminality and border prosecutors.

17. In addition, in April 2023, UNODC delivered a virtual presentation to national counterparts in Latin America and the Caribbean on the *Global Report on Cocaine 2023: Local Dynamics, Global Challenges*, issued by its Research and Trend Analysis Branch and CRIMJUST. In September 2023, UNODC facilitated the participation of prosecutors from AIAMP networks in an inter-agency and interregional training course on the challenges posed by cocaine production and trafficking, held in Tolima, Colombia. Furthermore, the Office supported the organization of an expert group meeting to develop a protocol for the protection and security of Ibero-American prosecutors, held from 29 November to 1 December 2023.

III. Expert group meeting on international cooperation in criminal matters

18. UNODC continued to support exchanges among practitioners involved in international cooperation in criminal matters. In this context, the Office, with the financial support of the Government of China, organized and conducted, from 23 to 25 October 2023, an informal expert meeting on international cooperation in criminal matters. The meeting brought together 55 practitioners and experts, including experts from central authorities of 15 Member States and 6 intergovernmental organizations. The participants represented different legal systems and were from institutions and agencies facing practical problems and challenges in the field of international cooperation in criminal matters. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with 19 in-person participants and 36 experts attending online.

19. The meeting enabled the exchange of experience and views among experts on practical aspects of international cooperation in criminal matters, capacity-building and technical assistance priorities. Furthermore, it offered the opportunity to discuss developments and additional cases involving the use of the Organized Crime Convention as a legal basis for international cooperation in criminal matters. The meeting also provided a platform to gather experts' suggestions on the development of a matrix identifying legal and practical issues that could arise in the implementation of article 19 of the Convention (see section IV.C below); the drafting of a research/issue paper on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on international cooperation in criminal matters (see section IV.D below); and the updating of the UNODC *Manual on Mutual Legal Assistance and Extradition* (2012).

IV. Tools to facilitate international cooperation to combat transnational organized crime

A. Knowledge management portal known as Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC)

20. UNODC continued to develop and expand the knowledge management portal known as Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC), an Internet-based platform that is freely accessible without the need for registration and that comprises several databases containing legal resources on organized crime and terrorism. To facilitate global access and promote multilingualism, the portal has been translated for use in each of the six official languages of the United Nations.

21. UNODC continued to populate the SHERLOC database of legislation with laws concerning organized crime, terrorism and cross-cutting issues. The database of

legislation currently contains more than 13,450 legislative extracts from 197 countries, most of which are parties to the Organized Crime Convention. Legislative extracts are catalogued according to country, article of the Convention and the Protocols thereto, crime type and relevant cross-cutting issues. The extracts are accompanied by attachments containing, or links to, the full text of the relevant law in one of the six official languages of the United Nations. As regards international cooperation, the database of legislation contains 432 extracts of legislation on extradition and 525 extracts dealing with mutual legal assistance. Accessing these extracts can assist national central and competent authorities in understanding the legal framework for cooperation with other countries.

22. The SHERLOC case law database can also be used to research judicial proceedings concerning organized crime and terrorism. It currently hosts more than 3,490 summaries of judicial proceedings from 137 countries, as well as several global and regional bodies. With regard to international cooperation, the case law database contains 97 cases involving international cooperation for the purposes of extradition, 41 cases involving international cooperation for the purposes of confiscation and asset recovery, 113 cases involving mutual legal assistance and 116 cases involving international law enforcement cooperation. Additional cases in the database concern further aspects of international cooperation such as the transfer of sentenced persons and the transfer of criminal proceedings.

23. The redeveloped and improved SHERLOC treaty database provides information on adherence to global and regional treaties concerning organized crime, terrorism and international cooperation in criminal matters. It can therefore be used by central and competent authorities to ascertain the relevant legal framework for international cooperation with their counterparts. Furthermore, the SHERLOC strategies database, which has grown to over 250 entries, constitutes a key source of information on national strategic efforts to prevent and combat organized crime, including efforts to promote international cooperation.

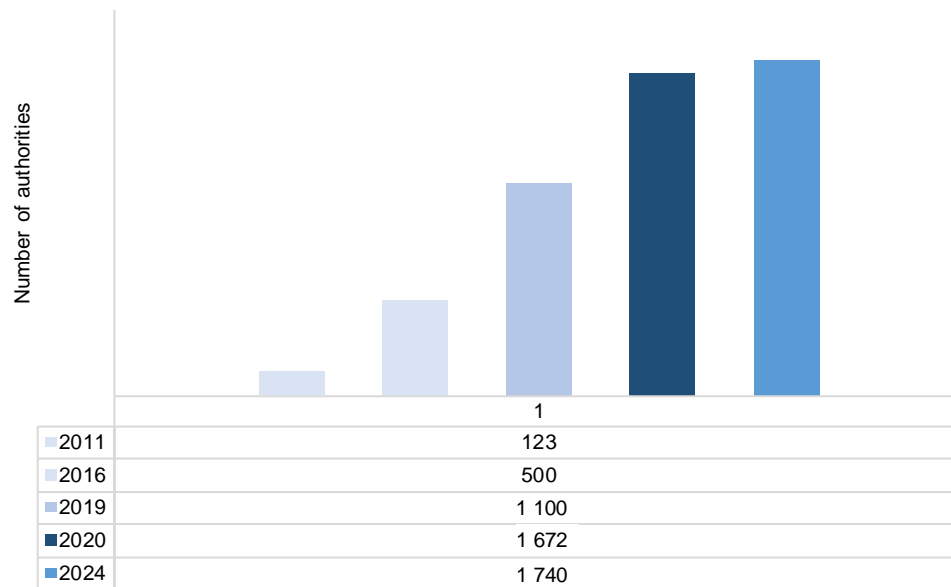
24. The SHERLOC portal was visited by 390,151 users in 2023. Most visitors used the portal in English, with Spanish and French coming in second and third in terms of use. The 10 countries with the highest number of SHERLOC users in 2023 were the United States of America (8.4 per cent of users), the Philippines (7.4 per cent), India (4.8 per cent), Ecuador (3.7 per cent), Austria (2.9 per cent), the United Kingdom (2.9 per cent), Algeria (2.8 per cent), Argentina (2.8 per cent), Colombia (2.2 per cent) and Canada (2.1 per cent). According to the latest survey conducted among SHERLOC users, the most common profiles were academics (19 per cent of users), students (14 per cent), law enforcement (13 per cent), non-governmental organizations (10 per cent) and policymakers (9 per cent), followed by prosecutors (5 per cent), authorities responsible for international cooperation (5 per cent) and Member States' permanent missions (5 per cent).

B. Online directory of competent national authorities

25. Pursuant to resolution 8/1 of the Conference of the Parties, UNODC continued to maintain the directory of competent national authorities, updating both its online version on SHERLOC and the e-book circulated to permanent missions and authorities listed in the directory. As a result, the number of authorities listed in the directory in line with the relevant mandates¹ had increased to more than 1,740 as at 11 June 2024 (see figure I).

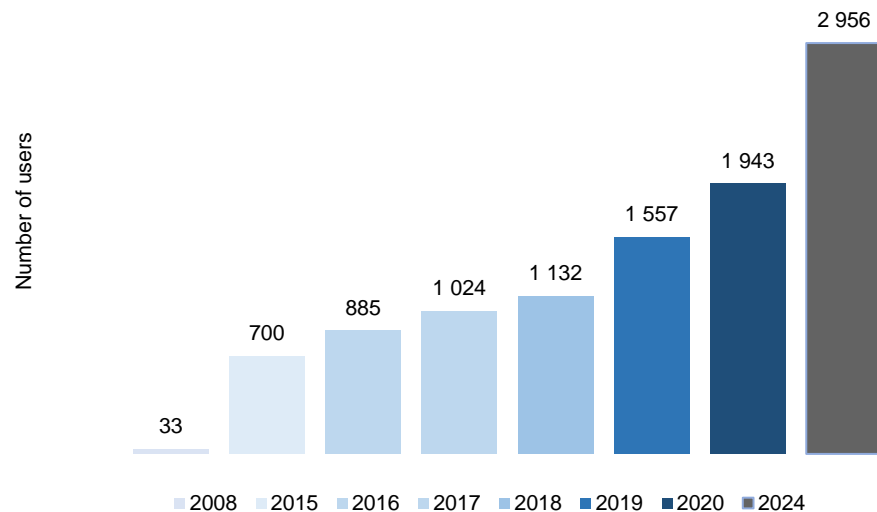
¹ Available at <https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/v3/sherloc/cna/index.jspx#/articles>.

Figure I
Number of authorities listed in the directory of competent national authorities, 2011–2024



26. Since the eleventh session of the Conference, the number of registered users of the directory has also increased, reaching 2,956 users as at 11 June 2024 (see figure II).

Figure II
Number of users of the directory of competent national authorities, 2008–2024



C. Matrix on joint investigations

27. In its resolution 11/1, the Conference of the Parties endorsed the recommendation that, in accordance with its earlier resolution 5/8 and relevant deliberations of the Working Group on International Cooperation, the secretariat should develop, subject to the availability of resources, a matrix identifying legal and practical issues that could arise in the implementation of article 19 of the Convention, as well as possible solutions for those issues, including by collecting examples of arrangements or agreements concluded between States parties for that purpose, and, upon request, should assist States parties in developing a set of legal, practical and operational guidelines for the implementation of article 19.

28. In accordance with the aforementioned mandate, UNODC developed, with the financial support of the Government of China, a report and a matrix annexed to it outlining the concept of and legal basis for joint investigations, with a focus on joint investigation teams, or joint investigative bodies as referred to in article 19 of the Convention. The report also outlines general considerations and concerns related to the establishment and functioning of joint investigation teams, and explores in detail the legal and practical issues associated with the conceptualization, setting up, functioning, closing and evaluation of such teams. Furthermore, the report highlights a range of case studies, good practice studies, national laws and model arrangements and agreements involving joint investigation teams and provides references to additional legal and scholarly material.

29. The report is aimed at international organizations and national authorities mandated to prevent and counter transnational organized crime, primarily law enforcement authorities, justice and home/interior affairs branches and the judiciary. The report is also intended for use by legislators and policymakers seeking to enable and improve international cooperation in criminal justice matters and to create the legal, regulatory and institutional basis for such cooperation. Furthermore, the report seeks to assist those charged with the protection of witnesses and victims of organized crime and those protecting the rights of accused persons and, by extension, fundamental human rights and civil liberties, especially in the administration of criminal justice. Lastly, the report is aimed at research institutions and experts working on organized crime, transnational criminal law, cross-border law enforcement and judicial cooperation.

30. UNODC has brought to the attention of the Conference a conference room paper containing an advance, unedited version of the aforementioned report and its matrix outlining legal and practical issues that could arise in the implementation of article 19 of the Convention on joint investigations (CTOC/COP/2024/CRP.3).

D. Issue paper on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international cooperation

31. The COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on law enforcement and criminal justice systems. In the area of international cooperation in criminal matters, the crisis affected the functioning of central authorities in a large number of States. However, the pandemic also fostered the development of new strategies and practices to cope with the challenges.

32. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international cooperation in criminal matters has been discussed in various intergovernmental forums (notably, the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation and the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in March 2021). Important recommendations on the issue were adopted by the Working Group on International Cooperation in March 2021, one year after the beginning of the pandemic, and subsequently endorsed by the Conference in its resolution 11/1.

33. Against this background, UNODC developed, with the financial support of the Government of China, an issue paper on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international cooperation in criminal matters, including challenges encountered, good practices and lessons learned in the aftermath of the pandemic. The paper addresses the need for more systematic research and analysis to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on the evolution and adoption of new practices related to international cooperation to combat transnational organized crime.

34. UNODC has brought to the attention of the Conference a conference room paper containing an advance, unedited version of the issue paper (CTOC/COP/2024/CRP.4).

E. Secure communication platform for central authorities

35. Secure communication platforms may offer practical solutions to facilitate timely and efficient communication between practitioners and promote the exchange of information among authorities involved in international cooperation in criminal matters.

36. In view of the increasing need of practitioners to communicate securely among themselves, UNODC is exploring the feasibility of setting up a secure communication platform to facilitate direct communication and informal exchanges among central authorities dealing with mutual legal assistance requests. One possibility being examined is to build on the example of the secure communication platform of the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities and to develop a similar application to be used as a secure communication platform by central authorities involved in mutual legal assistance. Another option being explored is to utilize the services of the Information Technology Service of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

37. At the time of drafting the present report, UNODC was testing the technical features of both options and their suitability for promoting communication in the field of mutual legal assistance. The Office also conducted an expression of interest survey, circulating a questionnaire among central authorities of Member States on secure communication tools that they might have in place or be interested in, as well as requirements for their development and use. Thirty-seven responses were received, and the secretariat provided a briefing on the issues highlighted in those responses during the fifteenth meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation, on 6 June 2024.

F. UNODC Mutual Legal Assistance Request Writer Tool: technical update

38. UNODC has provided extensive assistance with the use of its Mutual Legal Assistance Request Writer Tool. Such assistance has primarily been provided to criminal justice practitioners and officers of central authorities involved in mutual legal assistance to help them prepare requests more rapidly and effectively. The Tool is currently being upgraded with a view to enhancing its compliance with United Nations security standards. The upgraded Tool will have a more secure configuration and be integrated into existing network infrastructure and embedded into the password-protected UNODC Directory of Competent National Authorities. This will, in turn, result in a higher degree of synchronization and interoperability between the Tool and the Directory.

39. A presentation on the status of the technical upgrade of the Tool was delivered by the secretariat at the fifteenth meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation.

V. International cooperation as a key element in technical assistance activities to promote the implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto

40. In January 2023, UNODC delivered an online seminar for 400 officials of Ecuador – mainly judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers – on the use of the Organized Crime Convention to support international cooperation in criminal matters. The activity was organized jointly with the Council of the Judiciary of Ecuador.

41. UNODC supported a training workshop for officials of Somalia on mutual legal assistance and extradition. The workshop was organized by the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law and held in Nairobi from 6 to 9 February 2023. It was aimed at building stronger procedural mechanisms for mutual legal assistance and

extradition in Somalia. The issues discussed included the following: an overview of the applicable legal framework governing extradition and mutual legal assistance, including the pertinent provisions of the Organized Crime Convention; practical considerations and good practices in enabling central authorities to further global and regional cooperation; and extradition requests and other legal considerations in extradition proceedings.

42. Furthermore, UNODC provided legal advice to Somalia on its draft law on international judicial cooperation. Assistance was also provided through a legal drafting workshop held in Nairobi in March 2024. The workshop was organized by the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, and brought together various Somali authorities, including the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Office of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Supreme Court, the Benadir Regional Court, the Judicial Training Institute, the Somali Police Force, the International Criminal Police Organization National Central Bureau in Mogadishu and the national bar association. The participants discussed the current domestic legal framework for mutual legal assistance and extradition; the scope of application of the forthcoming law on international cooperation in criminal matters; the need to ensure consistency and coherence between the existing and forthcoming legislation; and the roles and functions of authorities involved in extradition and mutual legal assistance. The provisions on international cooperation of the Organized Crime Convention and the UNODC model laws on extradition and mutual assistance in criminal matters were used as reference and guidance as the Government of Somalia was working towards completing the process of accession to the Convention. As a result of the workshop, a timeline for the legislative drafting process has been established, the objective being to finalize the draft law in 2024 with a view to its entry into force in early 2025.

43. Other field-based technical assistance with international cooperation in criminal matters was provided to relevant authorities of Iraq through a training workshop held in Jordan in June 2023, and to law enforcement and judicial authorities of Lebanon through a training workshop held in Beirut in September 2023.

44. UNODC also delivered online training to prosecutors from the Department for International Cooperation in Criminal Matters of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine. This was delivered through two workshops, one on mutual legal assistance and one on extradition, organized by the European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine and the Prosecutor's Training Centre of Ukraine in October and November 2023, respectively.

45. Furthermore, UNODC provided support to 25 officials of national agencies in Bangladesh responsible for cross-border cooperation on human trafficking and migrant smuggling cases. The support was provided through a specialized workshop on mutual legal assistance to counter trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, which was held in Bangladesh in March 2024.

VI. Supporting the work of the Working Group on International Cooperation

A. Deliberations of the Working Group

46. The fourteenth meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation was held on 11 and 12 September 2023. At that meeting, the Working Group discussed the practical implementation of article 27, on law enforcement cooperation, of the Organized Crime Convention. The Working Group also considered the topic "lessons learned from the implementation of the international cooperation provisions of the Organized Crime Convention 20 years after its entry into force and in light of anticipated work under the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto: the indicative example of establishing dual criminality for extradition and mutual legal assistance purposes".

47. At the meeting, the Working Group discussed concrete cases of law enforcement cooperation, including cases in which use had been made of special investigative techniques such as electronic surveillance and controlled deliveries, as well as joint investigations. The Group considered the use of informal means of cooperation. For instance, reference was made to the importance of using informal channels of communication in urgent cases and prior to the submission of formal requests for mutual legal assistance. The Group also considered the key role of technology and the necessity of gaining a better understanding of how it could increase the effectiveness of investigations and prosecutions but also enhance the *modi operandi* of organized criminal groups. The report of the Working Group on its fourteenth meeting is contained in document CTOC/COP/WG.3/2023/4.

48. The fifteenth meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation was held on 5 and 6 June 2024, back-to-back with the fifteenth meeting of the Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance. The agenda of the meeting revolved around the role and impact of technology with regard to international cooperation in criminal matters, including opportunities, challenges and capacity-building needs, and legal and practical considerations regarding indicative extradition issues in light of the anticipated work under the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. The report of the Working Group on its fifteenth meeting is contained in document CTOC/COP/WG.3/2024/5.

49. The recommendations adopted by the Working Group on International Cooperation at its fourteenth and fifteenth meetings are annexed to a draft resolution entitled “Implementation of the provisions on international cooperation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime” and are brought to the attention of the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth session for its consideration and endorsement.

B. Working Group on International Cooperation and the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto: constructive dialogues

50. The present section provides an account of the role of the Working Group on International Cooperation in relation to the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto.

51. In its resolution 10/1, the Conference of the Parties launched the first phase of the review process and approved the self-assessment questionnaires and the blueprints for the lists of observations and the summaries, which are annexed to the resolution.

52. In its resolution 9/1, the Conference established the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto and adopted procedures and rules for its functioning, which are annexed to the resolution. The procedures and rules envisage a significant role for the working groups of the Conference, including the Working Group on International Cooperation. According to paragraph 12 of the procedures and rules, the Conference and its working groups are to add the review process to their agendas as an item consistent with their areas of expertise and without prejudice to their respective existing mandates. In addition, in order to ensure that the working groups are able to contribute to the Mechanism while also carrying out their respective existing mandates, each working group should dedicate no more than one agenda item per session to matters pertaining to the functioning of the review process.

53. In order to promote fruitful engagement with relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, and in accordance with article 32, paragraph 3 (c), of the Convention, the working groups are to have a constructive dialogue on the review process with relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (para. 53 of the procedures and rules).

54. The second constructive dialogue on international cooperation was held on 13 September 2023, following the conclusion of the fourteenth meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation. A total of 69 non-governmental organizations and six other relevant stakeholders (two from academia and four from the private sector), in addition to 47 States parties and one intergovernmental organization, participated in the dialogue.

55. The constructive dialogue focused on one of the substantive topics considered by the Working Group on International Cooperation at its fourteenth meeting, namely, the practical implementation of article 27 of the Convention. In this connection, two panels were held, on human rights considerations in the field of law enforcement cooperation and on cooperation between law enforcement authorities and communication service providers.

56. The outcome of the constructive dialogue (observations by the Chair based on the recommendations mentioned by participants during the constructive dialogue) can be found in paragraphs 49 to 53 of the relevant summary by the Chair of the constructive dialogue, available at www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/constructive-dialogues/IC_2023/Summary_of_the_Chair_-_CD_WG_IC-2023_FINAL.pdf.

57. A joint constructive dialogue on technical assistance and international cooperation was held on 7 June 2024, following the fifteenth meetings of the Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance and the Working Group on International Cooperation. A total of 91 non-governmental organizations and 21 other relevant stakeholders (8 from academia and 13 from the private sector), in addition to 43 States parties, one signatory observer State and one intergovernmental organization, participated in the dialogue.

58. One of the substantive topics of the fifteenth meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation was the focus of a sub-panel of the joint constructive dialogue on the role and impact of technology with regard to international cooperation in criminal matters, including opportunities, challenges and capacity-building needs.

C. Synergies with the open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting to enhance international cooperation under the United Nations Convention against Corruption

59. The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth open-ended intergovernmental expert meetings to enhance international cooperation under the United Nations Convention against Corruption were held in Vienna from 7 to 11 November 2022, from 4 to 8 September 2023 and from 10 to 14 June 2024. In an effort to enhance the exchange of information and synergies between the open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting and the Working Group on International Cooperation, a representative of the secretariat was present at all three meetings to brief participants on the work of the Working Group.

60. In particular, at the eleventh open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting, a representative of the secretariat provided an overview of the outcome of the thirteenth meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation, held in Vienna from 23 to 27 May 2022. At the twelfth open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting, a representative of the secretariat provided a briefing on the work of the Working Group, with a particular focus on how central authorities could benefit from the use of modern technology and on research regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international cooperation in criminal matters. At the thirteenth open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting, a representative of the secretariat gave a briefing on the outcome of the fourteenth and fifteenth meetings of the Working Group, held in Vienna on 11 and 12 September 2023 and on 5 and 6 June 2024, respectively.

VII. Discussions in the context of other intergovernmental processes with a focus on international cooperation: an update

A. Preparations for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

61. In its resolution [78/223](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the institutes of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network, to prepare a discussion guide for the regional preparatory meetings for the Fifteenth Congress and for the Congress itself in a timely manner in order to enable those meetings to be held as early as possible in 2025, and invited Member States to be actively involved in that process.

62. In line with the resolution, a draft discussion guide for the regional preparatory meetings and for the Fifteenth Congress was prepared by the secretariat. The draft text of the discussion guide (conference room paper E/CN.15/2024/CRP.1) was made available to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its thirty-third session, with a view to affording Member States an opportunity to offer feedback or comments on its content. The discussion guide, in its final form, will be used as a key substantive document to guide the deliberations at the regional preparatory meetings and the Congress itself.

63. The potential of the Organized Crime Convention to strengthen and foster international cooperation to combat organized crime, as well as new and emerging forms of crime, is considered and analysed under the section of the discussion guide on substantive item 3 of the agenda of the Fifteenth Congress (“Addressing and countering crime – including organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations – in new, emerging and evolving forms”).

B. Thematic discussion at the thirty-third session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

64. On 14 May 2024, in the context of the thirty-third session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, a thematic discussion was held on the topic “Promoting international cooperation and technical assistance to prevent and address organized crime, corruption, terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and other forms of crime, including in the areas of extradition, mutual legal assistance and asset recovery”.

65. During the debate and after a panel discussion, many speakers reported on legal and other institutional measures, including the review of relevant legal frameworks, that had been undertaken in their countries to enhance the effectiveness of international cooperation mechanisms. Some speakers identified challenges that had hindered international cooperation, including different legal systems; a lack of standardized laws; excessive formalities in handling mutual legal assistance and extradition requests; a lack of reciprocity leading to the denial of international cooperation requests; cultural and language barriers; an increased number of cases; a lack of record-keeping; and a lack of financial resources to handle mutual legal assistance requests.

66. In response to existing challenges, many speakers stressed the importance of further advancing the use of multilateral instruments such as the Organized Crime Convention, as well as regional and bilateral agreements or arrangements, as legal bases for international cooperation. Several speakers also highlighted the need for adequate and robust domestic legislation on international cooperation that could be used in the absence of treaty arrangements. The summary of the deliberations during the thematic discussion is contained in the report of the Commission on its thirty-third session ([E/2024/30](#)).

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

67. UNODC, as the guardian of the Organized Crime Convention, continued to support States parties in their efforts to effectively implement the provisions of the Convention, including those on international cooperation. In doing so, UNODC has sought to accord priority to translating into practice the policy directions given by the Conference in this field, in particular those contained in the recommendations adopted by the Working Group on International Cooperation. In this connection, a draft resolution on the implementation of the provisions on international cooperation of the Organized Crime Convention has been submitted by the Chairs of the Working Group at its fifteenth meeting to the Conference for its consideration and endorsement. The draft resolution includes two annexes: the first lists the recommendations adopted by the Working Group at its fourteenth meeting, held in September 2023, and the second contains the recommendations adopted by the Group at its fifteenth meeting, held in June 2024.

68. To pursue further improvements through concerted efforts to streamline action and achieve better results in the field of international cooperation in criminal matters, the Conference may wish to:

(a) Continue to encourage States parties to make, consistent with their national legal frameworks, the widest possible use of the Organized Crime Convention as a legal basis for international cooperation in relation to offences covered by the Convention, including serious crimes as defined therein, and in accordance with relevant recommendations of the Working Group on International Cooperation, as endorsed by the Conference;

(b) Encourage States to provide funding on a consistent and sustainable basis for the provision by UNODC of technical assistance with capacity-building and to support central and other competent authorities involved in international cooperation in criminal matters.
