

The SHERLOC Team is pleased to share with you Issue No. 18 of our newsletter regarding our recent efforts to facilitate the dissemination of information regarding the implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, and the international legal framework against terrorism.



In this issue

**UNODC'S TOOLS: THE
DIRECTORY AND MLA
REQUEST WRITER TOOL**

DIGEST OF CASES

RECENT ACTIVITIES

MEET A CONTRIBUTOR

EDITORIAL: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

Transnational organized crime has global reach and affect all Member States. Efforts to combat transnational organized crime should be coordinated across borders and therefore the promotion of international cooperation should be at the forefront of efforts to address this scourge.

In this issue, we focus on four parameters of the work of UNODC to facilitate and promote international cooperation to combat transnational organized crime: three of them are related to pertinent tools (CNA Directory; the Mutual Legal Assistance Request Writer Tool; and a digest of cases on international cooperation); and one is related to policy-making work in this field (last meeting of the Working Group on International Cooperation of the Conference of the Parties to the UNTOC).

INTRODUCING THE DIRECTORY OF COMPETENT NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

International cooperation in criminal matters, including for the purpose of combating transnational organized crime, relies on effective communication and coordination between Member States. To facilitate such communication, UNODC has developed and regularly updates the Directory of Competent National Authorities (also known as CNA Directory) designated under:

- the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988,
- the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC),
- the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and
- relevant resolutions of different intergovernmental bodies (General Assembly, Security Council, Conference of the Parties to the UNTOC, Conference of States Parties to the UNCAC)

The Directory is an on-line password protected database, hosted by SHERLOC and available at <https://sherloc.unodc.org/>. It contains contact information of national authorities authorized to receive, respond to and process requests of assistance for matters related to, inter alia mutual legal assistance; extradition; transfer of sentenced persons; illicit traffic by sea of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; prevention of corruption; asset recovery; international cooperation in civil and administrative proceedings relating to corruption; cooperation to combat smuggling of migrants by sea; cooperation to combat trafficking in firearms; prevention of transnational organized crime; trafficking in cultural property; cooperation to combat terrorism.



Authorities listed in the Directory are also clearly indicated in relation to the mandate under which they are designated. The Directory allows competent authorities to have easy access to constantly updated contact information of their counterparts and provides information on means of communication, accepted languages, legal requirements for cooperation and specific procedures to be followed.

The Directory also enables access to relevant pieces of national legislation and national templates or guidelines. It is accessible to authorities and government agencies with a user account and it currently has over 2000 users and **more than 1146 authorities listed from 184 States and the European Union.**

THE MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE REQUEST WRITER TOOL

Expeditious transmission/execution of mutual legal assistance requests is a prerequisite for the efficiency of relevant mechanisms for international cooperation in criminal matters. Requests often need to be generated at very short notice and in such a way that avoids legal pitfalls and obstacles when different legal systems are trying to lend each other support. Effective assistance requires requests to be submitted “right the first time”. This means that such requests need to be communicated and executed promptly and, further, contain all critical information to:

- facilitate affirmative decision on, and follow-up action towards, their execution; and
- avoid legal pitfalls and obstacles in both the requested and the requesting States when different legal systems and practices are involved.

As part of its legal assistance services and in an effort to help practitioners draft effective and accurate MLA requests, receive more useful responses and streamline the relevant process, UNODC has developed a Mutual Legal Assistance Request Writer Tool, which can be used for all serious offences and not just those covered by international conventions.

This tool is a software application which has been designed to provide guidance to practitioners through each step of the drafting process of a mutual legal assistance request.

In doing so, the software uses checklists to prompt the entry of the information necessary for the requested State to execute the request.

As a result of the process and as final stage, the tool generates the draft request in a format ready for signature and submission. The software also contains internet links to a wide range of information on treaties, national legislation and contact particulars of central authorities and contact persons for direct communication.

By using the Mutual Legal Assistance Request Writer Tool, States can avoid incomplete or incorrect requests and minimize the risk of delay or refusal. Using the tool also helps accelerate responses to requests through its standardized format and content. The tool can be downloaded from the UNODC website: <https://www.unodc.org/mla/en/index.html> as an open resource.



UNTOC AS LEGAL BASIS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN CRIMINAL MATTERS: DIGEST OF CASES



In accordance with a mandate of the Conference of the Parties to the UNTOC, UNODC developed and will release shortly a digest of cases in which the Convention has been used as legal basis for international cooperation in criminal matters. The digest represents the first and most comprehensive study of the practical use of the international cooperation provisions of the Convention, as documented in actual cases.

Drawing on more than 100 cases from around the world, the digest analyses the available information in terms of type of cooperation involved, cooperating States, offences at stake and other international agreements involved, in order to provide a better understanding of the circumstances in which the Convention is used, the opportunities offered by its use and the challenges and obstacles faced by States parties in that regard.

The goal of the digest is to present the fullest possible picture of the practical use of the Convention as a legal basis for international cooperation at a significant juncture: just after the 20th anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of the Convention and 18 years after its entry into force.

In doing so, the digest facilitates the sharing of relevant experiences of States parties and, based on the lessons learned, the development of recommendations aimed at enhancing and increasing the use of the Convention as a tool for international cooperation to combat transnational organized crime more effectively.

EXPLORE FURTHER CASES ON
ORGANISED CRIME AND
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
ON SHERLOC'S CASELAW
DATABASE: [CLICK HERE](#)

RECENT ACTIVITIES

12th session of the Working Group on International Cooperation

On 25-26 March 2021, UNODC hosted in Vienna the twelfth session of the Working Group on International Cooperation of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (COP-UNTOC). Due to the conditions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held in a hybrid format, with a restricted number of participants present in the meeting room, and all other participants being remotely connected using an interpretation platform contracted with the United Nations. The meeting was attended by representatives from 89 parties to the Convention, one signatory State and fifteen intergovernmental organizations.

During the two-day meeting, participants discussed and exchanged views on the use and role of joint investigative bodies in combating transnational organized crime and international cooperation involving special investigative techniques. The meeting also provided the opportunity to participants to engage in a constructive dialogue on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international cooperation in criminal matters.

Delegates discussed challenges, logistical issues and difficulties encountered due to the pandemic, while recognizing the positive repercussions and opportunities for flexibility and adaptability, that could lead to better results in the field of international cooperation in criminal matters also in the post-COVID-19 era.

The discussion focused on such important aspects as the further use of videoconferencing systems, secure communication channels and electronic transmission of international cooperation requests, the use of electronic signature, cross border access to electronic evidence, as well as the enhanced need for training, adaptation to new technologies and investments in human resources and infrastructure.

“Digital is the new normal!” - Launch of the Electronic evidence hub on SHERLOC

During the 30th session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), the Terrorism Prevention Branch of UNODC, organized a virtual side-event entitled ‘[Digital is the New Normal](#)’.



The event took place on May 17th and it aimed at presenting to an audience of more than 90 delegates, the latest practical tools on electronic evidence, including the [SHERLOC Electronic Evidence Hub](#), the Practical Guide for Requesting Electronic Evidence across Borders (developed in cooperation with EUROPOL, EUROJUST and the European Judicial Network) and its annexed Model Forms on Preservation and Disclosure of Electronic Data

3 steps to learn more about electronic evidence:

1. Watch UNODC Executive Director Message on [You Tube](#),
2. Visit the [SHERLOC Electronic Evidence Hub](#) and
3. Follow the Hub on [LinkedIn](#).

MEET A CONTRIBUTOR

This issue's featured contributor is Roberta. Roberta is a UN Volunteer/ Counter-Terrorism Specialist at the Terrorism Prevention Branch in UNODC in Vienna and acts as focal point for terrorism-related matters for SHERLOC. Before joining UNODC, Roberta was interning at the Embassy of Italy in Ottawa, Canada, where she worked for the Economic and Commercial Affairs Section. Roberta also worked as a technical assistant for a consulting agency, located in Spain, specialized in the management of international mobility projects and languages.

She is originally from Italy and works and speaks fluently in English, Spanish and French.

She holds a BA in Political Science from the University of Rome 3 and a Master's degree in International Relations from the University of Bologna, Italy.

