

## CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AND COMMITMENT

to attend the

**first meeting of the UNODC Network of Women in Law and Policy against Organized Crime in West and Central Africa**

*UNODC invites female policy makers, legislators, legislative drafters, law enforcement and criminal justice practitioners, in their individual capacities, from West and Central Africa working on issues related to preventing and combating organized crime, to express their interest in joining the women's network and the first network meeting to be held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from the 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of November. **By registering for the network event you confirm that you have obtained the necessary clearances from your institution.***

### **Background**

Lack of equal and equitable participation of women in the development of legislation and policies worldwide continues to present a significant obstacle to gender and human rights mainstreaming. The importance of women's representation in decision-making positions is highlighted and set out as an internationally agreed objective both in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Despite these commitments, women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide, with only 22,8% of Cabinet Ministers leading a policy area, and 26,5% of single or lower house parliamentarians worldwide being women. Research from UN Women highlights that at the current rate of progress, gender parity in national legislative bodies will not be achieved before 2063. Given that laws and policies developed at the national level impact broad populations, steps towards alleviating such underrepresentation are likely to have a disproportionate positive effect upon gender and human rights mainstreaming in laws and policies, and result in more comprehensive, just and equitable security frameworks. As recognized in the [UNODC Strategic Vision for Africa](#), "women are uniquely positioned to be agents of change, but their potential to help solve issues and innovate is not sufficiently utilized".

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), which nears universal adherence with 192 Parties, is the key international instrument in the fight against organized crime. In all aspects of implementing the Convention, Parties are required to take into account international human rights norms and principles in all aspects of the implementation of the Convention, with mainstreaming of gender and human rights considerations playing a critical role in developing comprehensive and non-discriminatory legislation, policies and strategies to prevent and combat organized crime. The importance of formulating gender-responsive and human rights compliant responses to organized crime has been stressed in recent international resolutions, including [UNTOC COP Resolution 11/2](#) and [Resolution 26/3 of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice](#).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s Global Programme on Implementing the Organized Crime Convention is playing a key role in this regard, supporting States in the development of effective legislation, strategies, policies and plans that integrate gender and human rights dimensions in preventing and countering organized crime, and in 2021, developed two issue papers that mapped the [gender](#) and [human rights](#) considerations in the implementation of the Organized Crime Convention. What is more, in September 2023 UNODC launched the new [Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender and Human Rights in the implementation of UNTOC](#). Building on the good practices highlighted in the aforementioned issue papers, the Toolkit aims to support the mainstreaming of intersectional gender and human rights considerations into laws, policies and strategies against organized crime, in line with UNTOC and other relevant instruments.

To further the mainstreaming of gender and human rights in the implementation of the Organized Crime Convention in West and Central Africa, UNODC seeks to establish a Network of Women in Law and Policy against Organized Crime in the region. Indeed, women networks can be a powerful tool in advocating for and effecting change in this regard, as they equip women with skills and contacts necessary to excel in their careers, ultimately strengthening female representation and making progress towards gender equity in governance. Research on academic and professional networks reinforces the case for the importance of gender-based networks for women (both formal and informal), showing that while men benefit most from broad networks, the most successful women combine a broad general network with a more tightly knit inner network of women with whom they are close.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The first meeting for the Network of Women in Law and Policy against Organized Crime in West and Central Africa will seek to support gender equality in decision-making on security and justice matters through increasing meaningful participation of women in the development of legislative and strategic frameworks to prevent and counter organized crime. To do so, the meeting will pursue the following objectives:

- Promoting the representation and active participation of women in the development of law and policy against organized crime in West and Central Africa;
- Promoting an enabling environment for female policymakers, legislative drafters and legislators in West and Central Africa and stimulating international exchange of best practices to this end;
- Enhancing the work of UNODC on gender and human rights mainstreaming in the implementation of UNTOC, including through identifying national and regional ‘champions’ of the matter.

### **Eligibility criteria**

The Network is open to female policy makers, legislators, legislative drafters, criminal justice practitioners and law enforcement working in the area of organized crime. Applicants must be from the following West and Central African countries:

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

### **Application procedure**

To apply, please fill out the following form:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=2zWeD09UYE-9zF6kFubccFGPQ97soRtMrbsgdej4YGFUNFc1WVNaUjJON0NaREIZU1FEUURTWVhERi4u>

**The deadline to apply is the 1<sup>st</sup> of November.**

### **Practical details**

The meeting will have simultaneous translation into French and English. UNODC will cover the expenses of international participants, including those from other cities in Côte d’Ivoire. This includes a round-trip economy-class air ticket to Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, accommodation, meals during the workshop, and subsequent reimbursement of residual expenses. Reimbursement will be in accordance with UN financial regulations and rules.

Furthermore, in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, we want to ensure that our events are accessible and disability inclusive to the extent possible. We welcome you to reach out directly to inform of us of any accessibility needs ahead of the meeting.