

Voluntary Pilot Initiatives (VPIs): Fostering collaboration between governments and relevant non-governmental stakeholders for the implementation of UNTOC and Protocols thereto

1. About the Voluntary Pilot Initiatives (VPIs)

In the context of [Resolution 9/1](#) of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC COP), which established the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Protocols thereto, “**Voluntary Pilot Initiatives**” by interested States parties are aimed at strengthening cooperation between the government review team, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), academia and the private sector at the national level. The objective of the VPI is two-fold:

- (i) To enable representatives of governments, civil society, academia and the private sector to work together on country-specific priorities to ensure a comprehensive response to transnational organized crime within the framework of the UNTOC and Protocols thereto.
- (ii) To support effective review process of the instruments through collaboration between governments and non-governmental stakeholders.

Furthermore, the VPIs are a unique opportunity for dialogue between the concerned government experts and relevant stakeholders at the national level in preparation for the UNTOC COP Working Groups sessions that precede the Constructive Dialogues on the review process organized in line with Resolution 9/1. This enables government representatives to receive useful perspectives from non-governmental stakeholders prior to the Working Groups sessions and to adequately set the ground for multistakeholder collaboration at the dialogues.

A. Process of the Voluntary Pilot Initiatives

Upon agreement with an interested State party, UNODC carries out the following activities:

1. Identifying relevant non-governmental stakeholders.
2. Organizing a “Scoping Meeting” with the Government’s UNTOC review team. UNODC will present the concept of the VPI and how to support the Government in the process. The Government’s UNTOC review team will inform of entry points and mechanisms for engaging civil society, academia, and the private sector in the review process.
3. Organizing a “Scoping Meeting” with non-governmental stakeholders to identify priorities for engagement with the Government. The priorities identified will be submitted to the Government for review and approval.
4. Facilitating a Voluntary Pilot Initiative meeting for relevant Government entities, civil society, academia, and the private sector to exchange on the priorities identified during the “Scoping Missions” and to agree on the roadmap for the way forward. This meeting serves as the launch of the VPI and is (ideally) hosted by the Government.
5. Drafting a report of the outcomes and showcasing it in relevant UNTOC processes.
6. Facilitating the establishment of a National Civil Society Alliance to coordinate with the Government’s UNTOC review team.

7. Organize a briefing session for States parties, civil society, academia and the private sector on the margins of relevant sessions of UNTOC COP to present the experience from the VPIs and ways in which governments and non-governmental stakeholders can further cooperate towards an effective Review Mechanism.
8. Facilitating the implementation of the roadmap agreed during the Voluntary Pilot Initiative meeting.

B. Expected outcomes of the Voluntary Pilot Initiatives

The outcomes of the VPIs are a set of agreed priorities for engagement and a roadmap for collaboration. To facilitate sustainability of the initiative and ensure coordinated communication, a National Civil Society Alliance is established to coordinate with the Government's UNTOC review team.

2. “Menu of options” for collaboration:

It will be up to each State party volunteering to conduct a VPI to decide on the degree of collaboration between their national review team and relevant non-governmental stakeholders. However, to provide an outline of potential components for such collaboration, the following three scenarios are provided as reference:

A. Minimum impact – space for constructive collaboration

- Meeting between government experts and representatives of NGOs, academia, and the private sector.
- Identification and agreement on national priorities on combatting organized crime.
- Development of joint recommendations to address issues related to organized crime.
- Establishment of a National Civil Society Alliance.
- Inclusion of relevant stakeholders in [*WhatsOn*](#) (a UNODC knowledge hub of relevant stakeholders including NGOs, academia and the private sector doing work related to or relevant to transnational organized crime).

B. Medium impact – consultative and inclusive collaboration

In addition to options provided in scenario A:

- Invite National Civil Society Alliance members to consult with government experts on thematic issues ahead of UNTOC COP Working Group sessions and before the completion of self-assessment questionnaires for the UNTOC Review Mechanism.
- Establishment of informal thematic Task Force groups between Government and NGOs, academics and the private sector.
- Inclusion of inputs from NGOs, academia and the private sector into the UNTOC review process.

C. High impact – formalized collaboration and integration of stakeholders

In addition to options provided in scenarios A & B:

- Establishment of a more formal national multi-stakeholder body (e.g. an Advisory Board) whose members would meet at least twice a year to review the progress made in the implementation of UNTOC and Protocols at the country level, complementary to the official review.
- Include members of civil society as observers or experts in the REVMOD¹.
- Inclusion of NGOs, academics and private sector representatives in the national delegation to the Conference of the Parties to UNTOC.
- Initiation of relevant projects/initiatives at the national level.

5. Implementation

States parties have the final say about the decision to hold a VPI. When a country accepts or requests to hold a VPI, they also decide on the focus of the dialogue (e.g. criminalization, human trafficking, etc.) in consultation with UNODC, in relation to the Review Mechanism's cluster under review at a given time for the country.

The coordination and facilitation of the VPIs are carried out by the UNODC Civil Society Unit in close collaboration with the UNTOC Review Mechanism Secretariat and with the support of relevant UNODC field offices.

6. Background

At the ninth session of the UNTOC COP, held in Vienna in October 2018, a Review Mechanism was adopted under [Resolution 9/1](#), entitled '*Establishment of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto*'. As per the Procedures and Rules of the Review Mechanism, an important role was given to the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations.

A. Entry points for the engagement of non-governmental stakeholders in the review process

- Civil society organizations can participate in the sessions of the Conference of the Parties in accordance with its [rules of procedure](#).
- In accordance with paragraph 53 of the Mechanism's Procedures and Rules, "constructive dialogues" shall be convened by their respective chairs with the support of UNODC following the conclusion of each session of the working groups.
- Pursuant to paragraph 23 of the same Procedures and Rules, States parties under review are encouraged to prepare their responses to the self-assessment questionnaires through broad consultations at national level with all relevant stakeholders.

¹ REV MOD is a secure module of UNODC's SHERLOC through which the review of the UNTOC and the Protocols thereto is conducted.



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B. Context for implementation: SE4U project

In order to ensure meaningful engagement of relevant non-governmental stakeholders in the UNTOC and Protocols review process through the above-mentioned entry points, the UNODC Civil Society Unit (CSU) is implementing a project on *Stakeholder Engagement for the implementation of UNTOC, its review mechanism and related activities*, known as SE4U project, in close collaboration with the UNTOC Review Mechanism Secretariat, and in cooperation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. The [SE4U project](#) increases non-governmental stakeholders' (CSOs, academia and the private sector) capacity to engage in the implementation of the Convention, fosters constructive contributions to its Review Mechanism, facilitates collaboration between State parties and non-governmental stakeholders, and enables stakeholders to promote the application of UNTOC at global, regional, national, and local levels.