

Voluntary country-specific initiatives to strengthen dialogue between governments and relevant stakeholders in the UNTOC review process

1. Background

At the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), 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.

Entry points for civil society engagement 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](#);
- Specific sessions of “constructive dialogues” shall be convened following the conclusion of each sessions of the five working groups by their respective chairs;
- Pursuant to Paragraph 23 of the Procedures and Rules of the Review Mechanism, States parties under review are encouraged to reply to the self-assessment questionnaires through broad consultations at national level with all relevant stakeholders.

2. UNODC’s project to build capacity of relevant stakeholders on UNTOC

In order to ensure a meaningful engagement with relevant stakeholders in the UNTOC review process through the above-mentioned entry points, the UNODC Civil Society Unit (CSU) is implementing a project on *Building the capacity of civil society to engage in the UNTOC, its review mechanism and related activities* in cooperation with the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime.

3. Voluntary country-specific initiatives

One of the key outcomes of the project is to initiate **voluntary country-specific “Pilot initiatives”** by interested Member States, aimed at strengthening cooperation between their competent national authorities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), academia and the private sector at the national level. Since the constructive dialogues envisaged in Resolution 9/1 will only take place following the conclusion of the working group sessions, the pilot initiatives will be a unique opportunity to provide space for dialogue between the concerned government and relevant stakeholders in preparation for the Working Group meetings. This will enable representatives of governments, civil society, academia and the private sector to exchange views on how to work together on country-specific transnational organized crime priorities to ensure an effective review process.

Upon a voluntary request by a specific Member State, UNODC will consult with relevant stakeholders and assist in designing a capacity building module tailored to the priorities of that country. At the same time, based on the project's previous mapping exercise, identified local CSOs and private sector entities would be introduced to the competent national authorities with the view to unite through a dedicated workshop and pilot initiative at the national level. Such national initiatives could possibly also involve relevant regional actors. Where possible, relevant actors would be invited to attend one of the dedicated international workshops (envisaged in outcome 2 of the project), and already trained stakeholders would be supported to attend the national pilot initiatives as resource people.

a. Expected outcomes of the pilot initiatives

As an outcome, the pilot initiatives would aim to find answers to the following questions: how can the government, civil society and the private sector work together to ensure an effective review mechanism? What are the best areas civil society and the private sector can support Member States in the review process? What are the expectations from governments vis-à-vis civil society and the private sector? What are the main communication channels to allow the flow of information? The pilot initiatives will:

- Provide space for cooperation between CSOs, governments, academia and the private sector with a view to support the UNTOC review mechanism;
- Produce lessons learned, best practices and recommendations which would inform future Working Group deliberations.

b. Activities to be carried out during the pilot initiatives

The following activities will be conducted by UNODC to support the pilot initiatives:

- Facilitate joint meetings between national stakeholders (government, CSOs, academia and private sector) with the aim to design country-specific initiatives addressing the challenges and needs prevalent in that country in supporting the UNTOC implementation;
- Based on the findings, recommendations and decisions of these meetings, identify and launch country-specific pilot initiatives, taking into account the session of the Working Group the country is party to;
- Organize at least one pilot visit to each of the pilot countries to assess and support the pilot initiative process, keeping in mind the gaps, challenges and needs previously identified during the project. UNODC will aim to partner with local academic institutions and/or centers of excellence to host the meetings;
- Monitor and support the involvement of trained CSOs, academics and the private sector in the pilot initiatives supporting the UNTOC Review Mechanism;

- Follow-up with UNODC Field Offices and UNTOC thematic focal points¹ to mobilize local/regional resources to assist in initiatives undertaken by CSOs, academics and the private sector related to their participation in the country reviews;
- Produce a report in consultation with the host country based on pilot visits, assessments and consultations with the concerned countries;
- Organize an NGO Briefing session for Member States, civil society, academia and the private sector on the margins of relevant sessions of COP UNTOC and present the experience from the pilot initiatives and how governments and CSOs can further cooperate towards an effective Review Mechanism and facilitate civil society participation thereof.

4. “Menu of options” for government - NGOs, academics and private sector collaboration:

It will be up to each Member State volunteering to conduct a pilot initiative to decide on the degree of collaboration between their competent national authorities and other relevant stakeholders. However, to provide an outline of potential ingredients to such collaboration, the following three scenarios are provided as reference:

A) Minimum impact – constructive collaboration space

- Meeting between government experts and representatives of NGOs, academia, and the private sector
- Identification and agreement on national priorities on organized crime
- Establishment of informal thematic Task Force groups between Government and NGOs, academics and the private sector
- Development of joint recommendations to address relevant TOC aspects
- Inclusion of relevant stakeholders in [WhatsOn](#) (a UNODC Sherloc-powered 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 menu options provided in scenario A:

- Invite Task Force members to consult with government experts on thematic issues ahead of UNTOC Working Group meetings and before the completion of self-assessment questionnaire
- Inclusion of inputs from NGOs, academia and the private sector into the review process

C) High impact – formalized collaboration and integration of stakeholders

¹ individuals who represent their own organizations and volunteered for the roles during UNODC Needs Assessment Workshop which was held in Vienna from 10-11 October 2020. They do not work for UNODC.

In addition to menu 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 at the country level, complementary to the official review. Include members of civil society as observers or experts in the REVMOD

- Inclusion of NGOs, academics and private sector representatives in the national delegation to the Conference of the Parties to UNTOC (COP-UNTOC)
- Initiation of relevant projects/initiatives at the national level

5. Implementation

State parties have the final say about the decision to hold pilot initiatives. When a country accepts or requests to hold a pilot initiative, they also decide on the focus of the dialogue (e.g. criminalization, human trafficking, etc.) in consultation with UNODC.

The coordination and facilitation of the pilot initiatives will be carried out by UNODC Civil Society Unit with the support of relevant field offices.

6. Process and methodology (based on the previous Pilot Initiative)

- Mapping of relevant stakeholders in the country
- Regular consultation with the country's Focal Point for UNTOC review
- Identification of issues on the ground through desk research, survey questionnaire and information from UNODC field office and relevant non-governmental stakeholders
- Invitation of stakeholders to the scoping mission (based on the list from the mapping exercise and suggestion from the Government)
- During the scoping mission (in-person in the country), guided focus group discussions for non-governmental stakeholders to identify priorities (focusing on the Convention and the 3 protocols)
- During the scoping mission (in-person in the country ideally hosted at one of the Government institutions), official presentations by Government experts and UNODC to present the context of the Pilot Initiative in the framework of national strategies
- During the Pilot Initiative meeting (in-person in the country ideally hosted at one of the Government institutions), official presentations from relevant Government experts and UNODC
- During the Pilot Initiative meeting (in-person in the country ideally hosted at one of the Government institutions), guided group work to narrow down priorities, match the priorities with national strategies (the priorities should be limited in numbers and specific in scope), and agreeing on the steps for the way ahead
- Drafting of the report with best practices and lessons learned
- Presenting the outcome of the Pilot Initiative and the experience in intergovernmental meetings